



## Child and family support policies across Europe: National reports from 27 countries

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## Preface

It is with a great sense of accomplishment that we are presenting this compendium of national reports about the contexts, current developments, and policy actions in the area of child and family support in 27 countries across Europe. The collection throws light on the conceptualisation and delivery of Family Support in Europe, which is one of the main areas of interest within the Family Support Network (EurofamNet) funded by COST.

The national reports contribute to our body of knowledge by helping us learn more about national approaches to child and family support in the different countries (Daly et al 2015). As explained in Churchill et al (2019), the work helps us understand how family policy and support are offered in the different countries, and provide a detailed account of 'provision in context' across Europe. The reports address seven main areas, the details of which were provided to those responsible for completing the report a priori following rigorous piloting which attested to the viability of the various questions that were posed, and the extent to which they could be answered by the respondents.

The first three provide the context of the country in question. They include trends and issues related to demography, such as fertility rates; households by number of children; the share of persons from 0 to 19 and of retiring age; vulnerable groups including immigrant and emigrant persons; trends and issues related to family structure; parental roles and children's living arrangements (including out-of-home care). The third question seeks to depict the social landscape related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare. The reports then provide the national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions and actors which shape the goals, substance, and delivery of family support policy and provision. The family and/or children's strategic policy documents launched in the last 20 years are then listed, and reference is made to whether child and family participation is mentioned in the document and the extent to which such participation has been implemented. The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since the year 2000 is then provided with a particular emphasis on approaches and developments in the area. Cash support and other services; whether they are universal or targeted; are listed and the types of funding are indicated. Policy monitoring and evaluation are also taken into account. A critical commentary from a children's rights, social equality and an evidence informed perspective provides a conclusion to the report.

In spite of the piloting, limitations in comparing child and family support policies among countries nevertheless persists for various reasons; including the data and the sources available in the respective countries, and the level of support that the main authors had at a national level to write about the seven areas indicated above. This compendium is written by country representatives in the COST Action and/or other colleagues who are all scholars in the field in the area of child, family and social policy, political science, sociology, social work, psychology, law, anthropology, and other social areas. These scholars have in turn been helped to varying degrees by child and family policy makers and experts working on the ground in the respective countries. This way of working is in tune with the bottom-up philosophy of the COST Action which embraces an inclusive and collaborative philosophy in its *modus operandi*.

The data provided in the various answers is based on official data, policy documents, relevant literature and official websites, and each of the reports is peer reviewed by the 11 editors of this work, many of whom have also played the role of zone coordinators to support the authors in neighbouring countries in the writing of the report. These individual reports are summarised in an overview which serves as an introduction to the national reports, and which provides a synopsis of the findings.

As lead editor, I would like to thank all the editorial team who worked with me to complete this mammoth piece of work, including Rebecca Jackson who helped us with the Overview chapter, and Krista Bonnici who patiently proofread our work. Last but not least, I would like to thank Carmel Devaney, leader of group 2 and Harriet Churchill with whom I also shared the role of co-leader in the group. We met regularly as I was leading this project, and it was indeed helpful to share this space with them as I could bounce back any difficulties or dilemmas that cropped up along the way.

Our next step is to carry out more in-depth analyses of this substantial and significant work, and to make sense of the variety of approaches adopted in the various countries with regards to child and family support. We hope that these reports from all over Europe will help us extend our thinking on this important area of child and family policy, helping us to develop a more comprehensive conceptualisation of child and family support that might in turn lead us to propose new conceptualisations that can enhance children's rights, empower parents, and promote social equality in European societies.

Angela Abela

University of Malta

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**Radka Dudova** (MC member, Czechia) works as senior researcher at the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. She is an expert in the area of analysis of public policies and institutions. Her research interests are policymaking and practices of childcare and elderly care, women's bodily citizenship, policymaking on abortion, and changes in the labour market. She published articles, e.g., in the journal *Politics and Gender*, *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, *Sociological Research Online*, and the *International Journal of Ageing and Later Life*, and is an author of several books written in Czech.

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She has worked with gender-based violence, family structure and support at a theoretical and practical level; designing and evaluating violence prevention programmes.

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## Overview of the 27 national reports on family support, policy and provision in Europe

**Angela Abela, Radka Dudova, Andras Gabos, Hana Haskova, Bente Heggem Kojan, Tatyana Kotzeva, Arianna Thiene, Arturas Tereskinas, Lilian Tzivian**

### 1 Introduction

This report provides an overview of issues relating to family policy and service provision across Europe that is derived from 27 national reports from European countries, including three candidate status countries, one potential candidate country, two countries with special relationships to the EU, and 21 full members of the European Union.

This report covers responses to seven overarching aspects relating to:

1. Trends and issues relating to demography.
2. Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles, and children's living arrangements.
3. Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage.
4. The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions, and actors 'which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision.
5. The extent to which participation is mentioned in policy and implemented in practice.
6. The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000.
7. Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision.

The following figures illustrate the countries who participated in the production of this report, delineated first by region, and second by relationship to the European Union (EU).

Figure 1. *Participating countries grouped by region and relationship to EU*

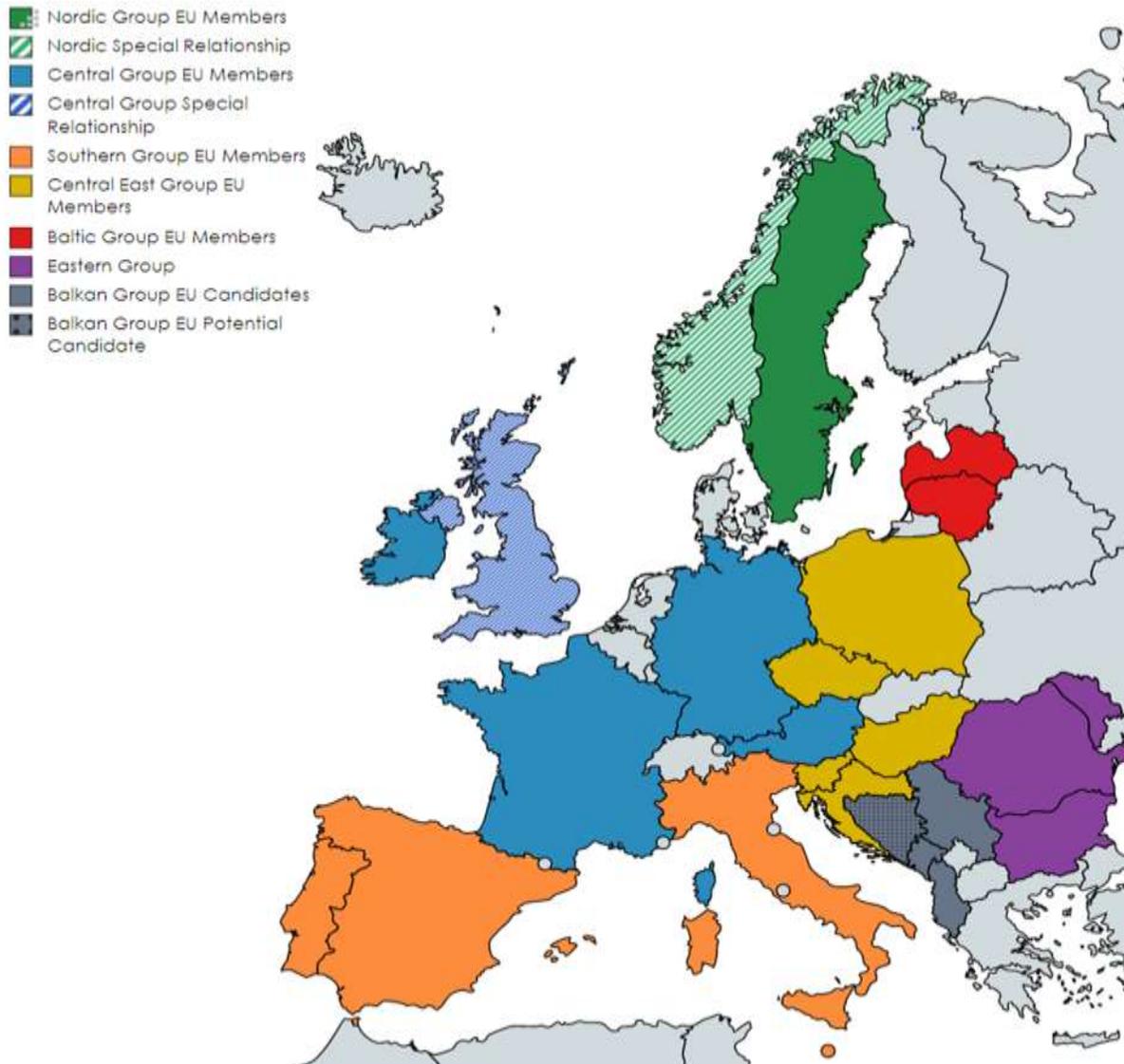


Figure 2. List of participating countries by relationship to the EU

**Full Member:**

*Central Group:* Ireland, France, Germany, Austria,

*Southern Group:* Portugal, Spain, Italy, Malta

*Eastern Group:* Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania

*Central Eastern Group:* Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic,

Slovenia, Croatia

*Nordic Group:* Sweden

*Baltic Group:* Latvia, Lithuania

**Special Relationship:**

*Nordic Group:* Norway

*Central Group:* The United Kingdom

**Potential EU Candidate:**

*Balkan Group:* Bosnia Herzegovina

**EU Candidates:**

*Balkan Group:* Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania

## 2 Trends and issues relating to demography

This first section provides an overview of the demographic trends and issues relevant to family and parenting policy, as well as relating to fertility, population diversity, and migration patterns.

### *Fertility rate*

There is a widespread trend towards a reduction in the fertility rate across countries sampled (n=14). Both Norway and Sweden saw a reduction in the fertility rate since 2010. In Central Europe, this trend also occurred in Ireland, France and the UK, while Austria and Germany saw an increase in the fertility rate. In the South European countries Spain, Malta and Italy also recorded a decrease in this rate, but Portugal saw a slight increase. In most countries in the east central group (Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovenia) the rates also increased, apart from Croatia which saw a decrease in fertility. In Latvia, a declining birth rate led to the implementation of policy to raise fertility levels which led to an increase between 2010 and 2018, however after policy ceased to be implemented the birth rate started to decline once more. Lithuania has seen a slight increase, as has Romania in the east European group, whereas Bulgaria has remained moderately stable, and Moldova has seen a slight decrease. Serbia has had an increasing fertility rate in the Balkan group, as has Montenegro although the rise is less pronounced, while Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, and Serbia experienced dropping rates. There is also a trend towards a drop in the population under 18 (n= 16), apart from Sweden who saw a slight increase. The youth population remained stable in Ireland, France, Germany, Spain,

Slovenia, Bulgaria, and Latvia. Conversely, there was a widespread increase in the population over retirement age (n=24).

### *Population, migration patterns and diversity*

Some countries sampled reported a level of diversity of approximately 20% within the general population with regard to immigration (Norway, Sweden, Portugal) and/or ethnic minorities (Norway, Portugal, Lithuania, Serbia, the UK, and Ireland). Other countries were more homogenous with approximately 90% or more of the population having one nationality (Croatia, Romania, Poland), or more diverse with the percentage of majority population at under 75% (Moldova, Latvia, North Macedonia, Montenegro). Bosnia Herzegovina was most diverse with the population split between Bosniaks (50.1%), Serbs (30.8%) and Croats (15.4%). Roma people were the most commonly reported minority groups (Norway, Portugal, Spain, Hungary, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, Latvia, North Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia Herzegovina). Not all countries sampled could provide data on diversity. Precise data is not available in the case of Portugal as it is forbidden by law to collect data on the basis of ethnicity.

In some countries, immigration has fluctuated in recent years rising up until 2015, before decreasing, then rising again at higher numbers than 2010 (Austria, Germany, Sweden), whereas others have seen their numbers steadily rise, including immigration from Low HDI countries (Norway, Malta, Portugal, Spain, Hungary, Romania, Lithuania, Ireland).

Across many of the countries sampled, immigration from Low HDI countries is higher than it was during 2010 however the peak of 2015 in some countries can be attributed to an influx of immigrants from low HDI countries (Italy, Germany) apart from the UK which saw a dip in migrants from this demographic at this time. In Poland, immigration peaked in 2017. In Ireland immigration from countries outside of the EU and UK stands at one third, while in France immigration from African countries stands at (46.1%), followed by European (33.5%) and Asian immigrants (14.5%). The Czech Republic has only experienced a small amount of immigration from non-EU countries, while Serbia, Romania and Bosnia Herzegovina note that they are transit countries rather than a destination for immigrants. Montenegro reports that immigrants usually arrive from other countries in the region, such as Serbia, Bosnia Herzegovina, along with Germany and Croatia.

Albania and Bosnia Herzegovina offered data showing saw a decrease in immigration. Other countries experienced higher emigration levels than immigration levels leading to a negative migration balance (Bulgaria, Moldova, Latvia, Serbia, Lithuania). For Latvia, Serbia and Moldova, depopulation is now an issue of concern.

### 3 Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles and children's living arrangements

This section provides an overview of trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles, and children's living arrangements. Family household types, marriage and divorce rates, lone parent families, and new family forms are outlined below. Information regarding children and young people living in institutions, in foster care, and receiving home-based support is also provided here.

#### *Family household types*

Couple households (with or without children) are the most frequent type of household across all the countries under study. Nevertheless, their relative proportion varies considerably across the countries - from 39% of all households in Latvia and around 41-45% in Estonia, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia, to 60% in Spain, 62% in Malta and 64% in Portugal. In most countries, around 50% of couple households also include children. In Latvia however only 20% and in Germany 21% of all households are couples with children, while in Portugal and in Ireland this proportion rises over 31% (OECD Family Database 2016). In 2020, most of the European countries recorded a sharp increase in households without children and a slight decrease in households with children, compared with the situation in 2010 (with the exception of Malta and Cyprus where the number of households with children increased) (Eurostat 2020).

At about 6-10% of all households, single-parent households constitute a significant minority of households in the studied countries. There is, however, also considerable cross-national variation: the highest share of single-parent households was in the Central and Eastern European countries (Latvia more than 11%, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovenia about 8% out of all households) (OECD Family Database 2016). Secularism seems to play a role in the CEE region, as the share is lower in Poland and Slovakia. The lowest share of single-parent households in the contrary is in the Southeastern countries such as Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, but also Italy and Spain.

The proportion of single-person households is affected by both the propensity of young adults to leave the parental home and the tendency of elderly people to live in with their children or enter a house for the elderly (or other institution). Single-person households constitute around 40% of households in Norway and 37% in Germany and Austria. By contrast, this proportion was lower in Southern European countries - around 20% in Portugal and 23% Malta and Spain. The share was also rather low in Poland and Slovakia (about 24%) (Eurostat 2020). The share of single-person households is however increasing in all the countries, probably due to the population ageing and to the growing predominance of nuclear family.

Concerning the size of the families, households with one child are the most common among households with children. In most of the countries, almost half of the households with children included one child. The share of the one-child families is highest in the Southern European countries: Portugal, Malta, Spain, and Italy, and also in CEE countries: the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, and especially Lithuania and Latvia. In contrast, in Sweden, households with one child constituted less than 40 % of households with children.

About four in ten households with children included two children in 2020 in Europe. The households with three or more children were more frequent in Ireland, Sweden, France, Croatia, and North Macedonia. In contrast, in Portugal, Italy, Spain, Lithuania and Bulgaria, less than one in ten households with children had three or more children.

In terms of trends, we observe the declining size of households that is currently more pronounced in the countries of Eastern Europe (such as Romania, Albania, Moldova). The downward trend concerning household size might indicate lower fertility rate, but this might also be an indication of nuclearization and the individualization of the family, particularly in urban areas in these countries.

#### *Marriage and divorce rates*

In almost all countries, marriage rates have declined over the past few decades. In Portugal, for example, the crude marriage rate (number of marriages per 1000 inhabitants) halved between 1995 and 2017. Overall, the declining marriage rates have been accompanied by increases in the average age of those getting married. The mean age of both women and men at first marriage is the highest in the Nordic countries, especially in Sweden. Differences between countries point to a variety of transition paths towards the formation of long-term partnerships: cohabitation has become an important form of long-term partnership especially in the Nordic countries, postponing and frequently replacing marriage as the partnership standard (see OECD Family Database, <https://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>).

Declining rates of marriage have also been accompanied by increases in rates of divorce. However, in more recent years, trends in divorce rates have become mixed. In most countries under study, the divorce rates have decreased in the last 5 years. In Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia, and the United Kingdom, crude divorce rates have fallen by at least 0.5 divorces per 1000 people since 1995 (ibid).

#### *Lone-parent families*

As stated previously, lone-parent families represent a considerable minority of families, even though most (about 80%) of children in Europe live with both biological parents. According to

Eurostat, Denmark (29%) and Estonia (28%) had the highest proportions of single-parent households among households with children, ahead of Lithuania and Sweden (both 25%), Latvia (23%), the United Kingdom (22%), and France (21%). In contrast, the lowest proportions of single-parent households were in Croatia (6% of all households with dependent children), Romania (7%), Greece, and Slovakia and Finland (all 8%) (Eurostat 2020). The majority of these families are headed by the mother. They are usually smaller in size, which means there is a lower number of children per family. In Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, and Austria more than 25% of children aged 0-17 lived with a single parent in 2018. The proportion was also high (over 20%) in Sweden, Denmark, Portugal, and Malta (OECD 2020). Lone-parent families have significantly lower yearly income than two-parent families; thus, they hit the poverty line more often compared to two-parent families. In most countries (except Hungary) the share of lone-parent families among all families was increasing in the last 10 years.

#### *New family forms such as same-sex couple households*

In 2020, sixteen European countries legally recognised and performed same-sex marriages; among them Austria, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Malta, Norway, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden. An additional fourteen European countries legally recognised some form of civil union, among our studied countries it is Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, and Slovenia. Slovakia recognises cohabitation for very limited purposes. Several European countries do not recognise any form of same-sex unions. Marriage is defined as a union solely between a man and a woman in the Constitutions of Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Serbia, and Slovakia.

In the countries where the same-sex marriages or unions are not officially recognised, statistics on same-sex couples do not exist (Romania, North Macedonia, Moldova, Lithuania). In countries where same-sex marriage was legally approved, the marriage rate of same sex couples has been steadily increasing (Portugal) or stable (such as in Norway or Great Britain), after a peak immediately after the implementation of the new Act. In Hungary, where the data are available from the Micro census 2016, about 25% of same sex couples lived with at least one child in the household. In Ireland, according to the Census in 2016, 86% of same-sex couples were cohabiting couples, with 14% married. Ten per cent of the Irish same-sex couples had children representing 19% of female same-sex couples, and 3% of male same-sex couples.

#### *Children and young people living in institutions, in foster care, and receiving home-based support*

Data on children and young people living in institutions, foster care, or receiving home-based support is not comparable across Europe. The data collections differ across countries, and it

sometimes lacks completely. A noticeable trend is a trend towards deinstitutionalization, mentioned in several national reports explicitly, e.g., in the report on Hungary, Bulgaria, Moldova, Croatia, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Portugal. It includes reducing the numbers of children placed in institutions, providing care in family-type accommodation rather than large institutions, and introducing family and preventive programs, services, and measures that support families, and prevent the separation of children from their families. Such measures include, e.g., measures to enhance parenting, social and communication skills, child's development, and housing; family supervision; support in situations of family conflicts; support to counteract domestic violence; support in situations of psychosocial difficulties or risk of poverty and exclusion; support for educational inclusion; counselling family members/caregivers; home recovery services; rehabilitation services; assistance in caring for children.

Some countries are much more advanced in deinstitutionalization than others, such as Norway and Ireland. Norway provides developed home-based support (mostly in-home rather than out-of-home), and more than 90 percent of children living out of home care in Norway are placed in foster care, and less than ten percent of such children live in institutional care. Similarly, in Ireland, out of all children in the State's care due to Child Protection and Welfare concerns, 65 percent are in general foster care, 26 percent in relative foster care, and only 7 percent are in residential care, and 2 percent in 'other' care placements. Furthermore, in England, Local Authorities responsible for local government report that almost three-quarters of such children are cared for by foster carers, while only 13% of them live in various residential care settings.

Some countries show a decrease of children in institutional care and a growing tendency to place children with foster carers rather than institutions (e.g., Italy, Hungary, Czech Republic, Bulgaria) and transform institutions into family-type accommodation centres (e.g., Slovenia, Bulgaria). However, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, institutional care still largely prevails. Moreover, Albania does not recognize foster care, and North Macedonia lacks a clear framework for accreditation and quality control of foster care.

In Romania, poverty is still the main reason for placing children out of home care. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, family separation is due to poor economic conditions or labour migration in one-third of cases. In contrast, in the Czech Republic, poverty and inadequate housing conditions must not be the main reason for placing a child out of home care since 2011.

In some countries, much more boys and young men than girls and young women live in institutional care, and boys and young men also have a lower chance of being placed in foster care there (e.g., Spain). In other countries, children with disabilities are at much higher risk of living in institutions that signalize a lack of support to families with care responsibilities towards

children with disabilities (e.g., Czech Republic, Latvia, Moldova, and Serbia). In contrast, Bulgaria closed all its specialized institutions for children with disabilities as part of the deinstitutionalization process. The Czech Republic has also been criticized recently by the Council of Europe's Committee of Social Rights for often placing Romani children besides children with disabilities into institutional care, including very young children. Infants and toddlers are in statistics on institutional care in some other countries too, despite efforts to minimize such numbers (e.g., Bulgaria, Italy, and North Macedonia). Moreover, Spain struggles with more people under 18 from foreign countries in residential care than Spanish nationality. The number of unaccompanied minors increased substantially there in the last few years as well.

Furthermore, there are huge differences among the European countries regarding the trends in the number of children in out-of-home care. For example, in Ireland, the percentage of children in the State's care due to Child Protection and Welfare concerns has decreased every year since 2015. In England, local authorities report a significant increase in children living with adoptive parents, in residential care settings or in foster care settings since 2008 and The Youth Justice Board and Ministry of Justice report that the number of children and young people aged 10-17 in custody (living in youth justice institutions following a conviction for a crime) has significantly decreased since 2009. In Germany, the number of children in out-of-home care has increased and then decreased again in the last few years. In Portugal, there was a decrease in the number of children in out-of-home care in the last decade, while the number of institutionalized youth and children with mental health difficulties has been increasing.

Home-based support seems to be the most diversified concept across European countries compared to institutional care and foster care. In some countries, a range of services, counselling, and measures are provided to families on various levels (e.g., Spain, Norway, Austria, and France). In some countries, home-based support was introduced just a few years ago, such as in Malta in the form of Home-Based Therapeutic Services or North Macedonia under the frame of deinstitutionalization. In contrast, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, cash support is paid to families in need, but there is a lack of counselling and day services. In Latvia, home-based support is available to high-risk families only. In Albania, home-based care covers only medical-related support. Furthermore, in Serbia, home-based support is performed by non-governmental organizations, and there is a lack of funding for home-based support on the local level.

There are no statistics on home-based support on the national level in, e.g., United Kingdom, Slovenia, and Italy. In other countries, statistics are available for the number of measures (e.g., France). However, in other countries, statistics are available for the number of

children and young people (e.g., Austria) or families who receive home-based support (e.g., Malta).

#### 4 Overview of social trends

This section provides an overview of social trends beginning with issues related to socio-economic trends and educational disadvantage, along with issues related to housing as reported in the survey responses.

##### *Socio-economic disadvantage*

The at risk of poverty ranges from 7.7% to 10% (Sweden, Czech Republic, Moldova), 11% to 15% (Norway, Austria, Germany, Hungary, France, Slovenia, Romania, Poland, Ireland) 16% to 20% (UK, Italy, Malta Portugal, Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina), 21% to 25% (Spain, Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Serbia, the UK, and Montenegro), up to 37% in Albania. Moldova recorded a rate of absolute poverty that has declined since 2014 but remains high at 25.2%. However, the rate of absolute poverty has increased in Bosnia Herzegovina from 23% to 28% in the period from 2011 to 2015. The at-risk-of-poverty rate is increasing in Norway, Lithuania, Italy, Malta, Spain, Hungary, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Latvia, and Lithuania. However, it is decreasing in Sweden, Germany, Portugal, Croatia, Albania, North Macedonia, and Serbia while staying stable in Austria. Despite the risk of poverty rate rising in Lithuania, Hungary and Spain, this rate is dropping for children there. However, children usually have a higher risk of poverty rate in Austria, Germany, Italy, Malta, Spain, and Hungary except for Croatia where the rate is similar.

The at-risk-of-poverty and social exclusion rates tend to be higher, ranging up to 15% in the Czech Republic, 15% to 25% in Norway, Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Montenegro and from 26% to 32% in Spain, Italy, Latvia, and Ireland. This rate is from 33% to 49%. In Serbia, Bulgaria, and North Macedonia. This risk rises to 58% in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The at risk of poverty and social exclusion rate is increasing in Norway and Italy, but decreasing in Germany, Portugal, Hungary, Bulgaria, Latvia, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Ireland. Children are more at risk of poverty and social exclusion in Italy and Hungary. Bulgaria has particularly high rates for children. In Slovenia men have a slightly lower risk of poverty or social exclusion than women.

The severe material deprivation rate ranges from 2% to 5% (Norway, Austria, Germany, Malta, the Czech Republic, and Ireland) up to 14% (Italy, Portugal, Spain, Lithuania) 15% to 25% (Hungary) and from 25% to 32% (Bulgaria). The at risk of severe material deprivation rate is increasing in Germany and Italy, but decreasing in Malta, Portugal, Spain, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, and Ireland. This rate continues to remain stable in Norway. Children have

higher rates in Austria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Bulgaria, but lower decreasing rates in Germany, Italy, Portugal, and similar rates in Bulgaria Lithuania.

Unemployment rates range from 2% to 10% (Czech Republic, Norway, Sweden, Austria, Germany, Italy, Malta, Hungary, Slovenia, Bulgaria Moldova, Latvia, Lithuania Serbia Ireland France), 11% to 15% (Portugal, Croatia, Spain, Albania, Poland, Montenegro) and from 16% to 25% (Bosnia Herzegovina and North Macedonia). The unemployment rate is rising slightly in Moldova but has decreased elsewhere. Youth are more likely to have higher unemployment rates in many countries (Austria, Portugal, Spain, Croatia, Bulgaria, Moldova, Latvia, Serbia, Ireland, the UK, France, Bosnia Herzegovina, and Montenegro) except for Sweden where the unemployment rate is similar to adults. Unemployment rates for this cohort are increasing in Portugal. Women are more likely to be unemployed than men in Sweden, Portugal, Albania, and Bosnia Herzegovina. Whereas men are more likely to be unemployed than women in Norway, Bulgaria, and Moldova. In Spain, Ireland, and the UK the unemployment rates are similar. Men have a higher employment rate in Germany, Malta, Portugal, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Moldova, Latvia, and North Macedonia. In Malta, Hungary Portugal, Bulgaria, Moldova, Latvia, Poland, the UK and Montenegro a gender pay gap is evident. In Malta and Hungary this gender pay gap is increasing, while in the UK and Portugal, the gap is decreasing. People with disabilities have low employment rates in Ireland (30%) and Norway (40%). In the UK, this rate is somewhat improved (58.6%) but still lower than the general population.

The groups most at risk for social disadvantage groups are Roma (in Albania, Norway, Spain, Hungary the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Croatia, Moldova, Latvia, Bosnia Herzegovina, and North Macedonia), Travellers (Ireland) and ethnic minorities (Malta and Bulgaria). Lone parents (Norway, Malta, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Moldova, Latvia, and North Macedonia) larger families (Albania, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Bulgaria Moldova, Romania, Latvia, and Serbia) and children and people with disabilities (Norway, Malta Slovenia Moldova Romania, Albania, France, Ireland, Bosnia Herzegovina, and the UK) are also at risk of social disadvantage. Low income and unemployed are mentioned in many responses (Malta, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Montenegro), as are Migrants and Asylum seekers (Albania, Norway, Sweden, Austria, Germany, Malta, Spain, Bulgaria, Moldova, Ireland, and France). Homeless and street children are identified as vulnerable to social disadvantage (Albania and North Macedonia), as are those with a low level of education (Austria, Malta, Hungary, and Bulgaria) or those experiencing illness/addiction/violence (Malta, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, and Ireland).

There is a slightly higher risk of in-work poverty in Ireland (15.4% vs unemployed 10.9%), which is also an increasing problem in the UK. In Ireland, children under 16 were at the highest risk of poverty and disadvantage (26.1%) followed by those on home duties (13.4%). In the UK Sector, gender, ethnicity and pay all dictate whether work will raise them from poverty, with low quality work on the rise.

### *Welfare*

Sweden's welfare provision is underpinned by social democratic principles, and it is a right of all citizens to receive welfare support if needed, including healthcare and education, however the system has been reduced in recent years. Norway has moved from universal to contractual rights in welfare provision. Austria provides a range of social assistance payments for loss of employment, and emergencies, and in addition provides a minimum income support which ensures that low-income citizens have an adequate guaranteed income. The UK deploys a system of universal credit to assist the unemployed, as well as low income and part-time workers. North Macedonia's welfare provision is likewise targeted at certain populations.

Since 2010, Hungary has focused on workfare and activation as part of its social protection programme. Malta also focused on welfare to work tapering benefit payments and implementing an in-work benefit scheme. In the same period, Spain notes that the levels of welfare benefit receipt has been steadily decreasing.

Between 2010 and 2019 Irish spending on social protection as a per cent of GNP fell from 15.1 per cent to 7.6 per cent. Lithuanian, Albania, Croatia, and Bulgaria welfare spending is lower than the EU average. While Albania has increased in spending over recent times, the range of benefits available to citizens is limited and social assistance is not tied to any minimum standard of living. In Bosnia Herzegovina social assistance is neither well-targeted nor needs-based oriented, and the majority of the budget is focused on war victims. The Croatian welfare system is based on the principle of social insurance, however it is under pressure for reform, and there has been a move to rationalise social expenditure. The largest share of spending is targeted at sickness, disability, and old age.

Croatia notes that the welfare system has a limited capacity to meet the needs of other social groups, such as the unemployed and those at risk of poverty. In Serbia, the income ceiling for access to social assistance is very low. Moreover, the adequacy of cash benefits interacts with a lack of social services with implications for the capacity of low-income families to meet their needs. Portugal is one of the least successful countries in reducing the rate of child poverty due to social transfers. In recent years, changes in eligibility have resulted in a reduction in benefits paid and thus the economic vulnerability and child poverty rates of families have

increased. Lithuania reports that a radical austerity strategy implemented since 2008 has resulted in a marginal welfare system which has implications for income inequality. France seems to be rediscovering the importance of state-led redistribution policies to combat inequalities including family allowances, which are increasingly becoming the last safety net for families in highly vulnerable situations.

### *Education disadvantage*

Lifelong learning has increased in Malta. In Sweden, Malta, Portugal, Bosnia Herzegovina, and Hungary increasing rates of tertiary education attainment are evident. However educational disadvantage is an issue for some groups of people in the European context. Tertiary education attainment rates can vary for migrant populations in Norway depending on their country of origin although there is evidence of generational social mobility. Early school leaving (Germany) and educational attainment (Slovenia) is an issue for those young people with migrant backgrounds. This is an issue that also affects Roma children (Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Bosnia Herzegovina, and Serbia) and Traveller children in Ireland. Children with disabilities also face educational disadvantage in France.

In Austria, Slovenia, Hungary, the UK and France, there is a strong correlation between socioeconomic background and educational achievement. Early school leaving rates are declining in the following countries and now stand at: Malta (16.7%), Portugal (10.6%) and Lithuania (4.4%). Early school leaving rates are low in Ireland (5th lowest in Europe) and upper secondary school/post-secondary completion rates are increasing Portugal (22.7%). Romania has achieved the largest decrease in early school leaving rates and stands at (15.3%), however this varies regionally. In Albania early school leaving rates are higher for boys than for girls. Serbia has increased enrolment rates at secondary level, while Moldova has made increases in participation at each cycle. However, early school leaving has increased slightly in Hungary.

At age 15, Hungarian children are below EU average with maths, reading and science while Bulgarian children struggle with literacy. Preschool attendance rates are low in Croatia and the Czech Republic. Romania, and North Macedonia. Regional accessibility affects attendance in Romania, and North Macedonia, while affordability is an issue in Croatia. In North Macedonia there is a lack of facilities at all levels of education affecting transfers between levels. Addressing this issue is a government priority.

### *Housing*

The general overcrowding rate is between 5% and 15% in Norway, Germany, Austria, Malta, Portugal, Spain, and Slovenia; 16% and 25% in Sweden, Hungary, Lithuania; 26% and 35% in Italy, 35% and 45% in Croatia and Bulgaria and up to 55% in Serbia, Romania and Latvia. It is

an increasing issue in (Sweden, Austria Italy, Germany, Spain) but a decreasing issue in (Malta, Portugal, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania). The overcrowding rate remains stable in Serbia. Homelessness is an issue in Ireland, the UK, France, and Poland, as is forced cohabitation in France and poor-quality housing in Poland. In Poland this problem is more acute in larger cities and less acute in smaller towns. In Bosnia Herzegovina, many people have yet to leave collective housing centres, and return to their homes in the post war period.

The general housing cost burden is between 5% and 15% in (Norway, Sweden, Austria, Germany, Italy Malta, Portugal, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Lithuania) 16% and 25% in (Bulgaria) and 26% and 35% in Serbia. It is decreasing in Austria, Germany, Malta, Spain, Hungary, Croatia, Lithuania, and Serbia, but increasing in Norway, Sweden, Portugal, Slovenia, and Bulgaria. There are considerable problems in accessing affordable and quality housing for many families with children on low incomes across the UK. While the Czech Republic and North Macedonia did not provide numerical data, they noted overcrowding is a significant issue and housing affordability contributes to social problems, as did Albania and Latvia.

Children face higher rates of overcrowding in Norway, Germany, Malta, Spain, Hungary, and Latvia, and higher housing cost burden in Austria, Italy, Portugal, Spain. This is increasing in Austria even while the housing cost burden decreases for adults. Conversely while the overcrowding rate increases for the general population in Germany it is decreasing for children. Meanwhile in Bulgaria, while the overcrowding rate decreases for the general population it is increasing for children. Migrants face significantly higher rates of overcrowding and housing cost burden in Sweden. In Bosnia Herzegovina, Roma, people with disabilities, and people leaving care face challenges accessing housing.

## **5 National public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions, and actors which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision**

The following sections present an overview of the various actors and institutions that frame the goals and substance of family support policy development and provision, including lobbyists, research and policy networks, stakeholder engagement, and the relevance of the political system for policy development and implementation.

### *Policy actors*

Out of 26 respondents, 25 agreed that central government played a key role in the formation and direction of family policy. Many countries (Austria, North Macedonia, Malta, Serbia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovenia) have a singular ministerial department spanning multiple issues such as health, education and social affairs which are responsible for family policy development and oversight, while in others (Albania, Sweden, Norway, Portugal, Hungary, Czech Republic,

Moldova, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Bosnia Herzegovina and the UK) multiple ministerial departments focused on various areas such as health education and social welfare have a policy and provision responsibility for diverse issues relating to family support policy and provision. In Montenegro, the primary policy actor is the ministry of finance and social welfare. In Ireland, Malta, and Croatia ministries exist which have a wide remit relating to groups in society including children, and families. In Italy, Croatia, Germany, and Norway ministerial departments are focused solely on children and families across the life course. Portugal has no specific ministry or department responsible for overseeing family policies and their impact.

#### *Policy development and implementation*

In some countries policy development is centralized, whereas in Germany and Spain local and municipal government structures could input into national policy. In Bosnia Herzegovina there is no single strategic framework for the development of social protection and there are no common policies in the area of family support across jurisdictions. In Romania, Slovenia, Hungary, and Italy, experts were invited to provide input into the policy process while NGOs contribute to the development of policy in Bosnia Herzegovina.

The implementation of policy provisions at a local level could be centrally orchestrated through national agencies (Malta, Portugal, Croatia, North Macedonia, and Sweden), or responsibility can be devolved to local government and agencies (Albania, Norway, Sweden, Austria, Slovenia, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Germany, Spain, and Portugal). In some cases, private agencies, NGOs (Spain, the Czech Republic, Moldova, Sweden, Montenegro, Bosnia Herzegovina) and religious/charitable organizations (Bosnia Herzegovina, Hungary) deliver services at a local level.

#### *Monitoring development of policy and implementation*

Some countries had the development and implementation monitored by specific groups, particularly those concerned with Human Rights, Civic rights or Child Rights (Hungary, Albania and the UK), child welfare (Sweden) and policy standards (UK) or interest groups (Montenegro). In other cases, organizational networks oversee policy implementation (Bulgaria, France). Other countries have a Commissioner for Children (Malta, the UK) an Ombudsman for children (Norway, Sweden Croatia), or Ombudsman for equality, anti-discrimination (Norway, Sweden) who perform this function. Some countries set up committees to oversee the implementation of policy and strategy (Albania, Malta) while in other contexts, Ministries internally monitor the progress of policy provisions (Croatia).

#### *Lobbyists*

By far the most common lobbyists to the policy actors of a country were NGOs and Special Interest Groups. The most common type of NGOs or special interest groups reported were focused on family issues (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary, Portugal, France, UK). There were also organizations and groups that focused on child welfare groups (Albania, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Moldova, Bosnia Herzegovina, and Ireland) and children's rights (Albania, Bulgaria, Sweden, Italy, Hungary, Moldova, Ireland) who advocate for children. Also included in responses were special interest groups including LGBT organisations (Norway, Croatia), asylum seeker organisations (Norway), those that work towards equality and diversity (Italy) and those focused on social issues (Ireland, Bulgaria, Malta, Italy, Portugal, Hungary). The orientation and focus of these groups were variable across or between countries. In Romania, these NGOs are almost totally focused on gender equality and violence. Meanwhile in other countries (e.g., Germany, Portugal, Hungary) NGOs are divided between religious and secular organisations which sometimes have opposing agendas (e.g., North Macedonia, Latvia) while in other countries (Lithuania, Latvia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic) conservative interest groups backing traditional families are on the rise. In other countries (Norway, UK, Sweden), public bodies such as the Ombudsman, National Board of Health and Welfare, Family Law and Parental support Authority etc. have a role to play in lobbying policy makers. Professional and service organisations also lobby policy makers in certain contexts (Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Bosnia Herzegovina, and Ireland).

#### *Research/policy networks*

In some countries governmental or public bodies monitored social issues and produced knowledge of relevance to policy development. In North Macedonia, the Department for Violence and Injury Control and Prevention collates knowledge relevant to policy, as does the Croatian Ministry of Demography Family and Youth and the Serbian Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit. The Austrian Child and Youth Welfare services, the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and an Italian Institute for Children monitor relevant social issues, while in Poland the Commissioner for Children's Rights fulfil this role. In others, academic research centres and networks aim to influence policy (France, Ireland, UK, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Serbia, Spain, Poland, Croatia, Bulgaria) while in Moldova an expert group contributes to policy development. In Bulgaria, Poland, Lithuania, and North Macedonia, various organisations focused on social services and rights to develop knowledge relevant to policy.

Some countries have well-developed research and policy networks spanning governmental agencies, civic interests, and academic contributors (Czech Republic, Hungary, Norway, Austria, Malta, Spain). In other countries different constellations of research networks, professional associations and academic institutions were the main contributors to knowledge in

the policy arena (Bulgaria, Sweden, Portugal Slovenia, North Macedonia, Serbia France, Norway, Malta). In some jurisdictions only two research/network contributors could be identified, government agencies and academics (Germany, Croatia), government agencies and NGO's (Moldova, Malta) or academic and NGO networks (Albania, Lithuania, Portugal, Bosnia Herzegovina). Latvia only identified academic researchers, while in Romania, policy networks consist of family orientated religious organisations.

#### *Political system and relevance to family policy/support*

In federalized jurisdictions regulation is centralized but decision-making and service provision are more autonomous at a local level (Bulgaria, Moldova, Portugal, Germany, Austria). This is also true for Spain which decentralizes decision-making in addition to service provision to autonomous regions. In some unitary jurisdictions decision-making is also decentralized and services are delivered at a local level (Italy, Norway, Sweden, Croatia, Czech Republic, and the UK). Other centralized systems delegate limited functions only to local government and maintain oversight and administration of service delivery and policy implementation (Malta, Hungary, Slovenia., Romania, Serbia, Lithuania). In France, local authorities have specific competencies, however centralized decision makers can intervene at local level. In Bosnia Herzegovina, the situation is even more complex. This federalized state consists of three jurisdictions, one of which is a separate administrative district (Brcko District), another a decentralized system of government (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the last a centralized system of government (Republic of Srpska) each with their own forms government at local and municipal levels, social protection systems and localized competencies which has implications for policy development and implementation.

#### *Stakeholder engagement in policymaking and reviews*

In Moldova and Serbia, stakeholder engagement is mandated by law. In Moldova it is estimated that 91% of draft decisions entailed consultation with organizations and civil society. However, in Serbia the impact of public engagement is less clear as it is often poorly implemented. Stakeholder engagement is a priority in public services provision in Ireland. The engagement of professional and expert stakeholders in policy processes is the sole form of stakeholder engagement in some countries (Austria, Italy, Portugal, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Bosnia Herzegovina). Bosnia Herzegovina recognizes the importance of engaging families and children in policy processes, but this is yet underdeveloped in practice. In Norway, service user participation is embedded practice and is part of the culture of service provision, while Sweden promotes public participation in local government. In the UK, the Children's Commissioners and key NGOs promote children's participation and rights in policy processes.

In other countries efforts are made to support both expert, and service user stakeholders in legislative processes (Germany, Romania, Ireland), and service development (Germany, Ireland, UK), or policy development (Bulgaria, Spain, Malta, Romania, Albania, Ireland). In Portugal, parents and children are more likely to be consulted at a local level only, while in Croatia there are burgeoning efforts to include children in the development of a strategy along with public participation initiatives. In Bulgaria, child and youth participation is held to be an important part of the realization of the rights of the child, while parents and families engage with policy through grassroots movements and protests. Meanwhile, Moldova supports the participation of youth through a network of councils.

## **6 Participation in policy, strategies and government documentation relating to families & children**

This section presents an overview of the respondent's accounts of participation in the policies, strategies and government documents relating to families and children. This document presents the discussion of participation in the following ways, beginning with a review of documents where participation is mentioned but the meaning is unclear before discussing where participation is viewed as a right and describing how participation in decision-making processes is mandated by policy and legislative provisions in general, and in child protection and welfare proceedings in particular. Participation in the development and implementation of policy is discussed next, followed by an overview of participatory structures. Next mentions of participation in social and economic life are outlined. Instances where participation as a concept is undeveloped are also noted.

### *Participation mentioned in policy documents*

There are a few instances where the participation of children and families are mentioned but the nature of their participation is unclear. In North Macedonia the participation of children and families is mentioned in a broad range of policy documents, the participation of families in general is mentioned in Family Law (2015); Law on the Prevention and Protection of Domestic Violence (2014, 2015); Law on Health Protection (2012, 2016); Law on the Ombudsman (2018); National Health Strategy in the Republic of Macedonia (2020); Strategy for Roma People in the Republic of Macedonia (2017-2020). Further references to participation are found in the National strategy (2020-2025); Action Plan for Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence (2020-2022); the National Strategy for Equalization of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2010-2018); National Action Plan for Children Rights (2012-2015); the Program for Early Learning and Development (2014), and the Annual Program for Development Activity for Children's Protection. It is not clear as to whether children and family participated in the policy documents formation or whether their participation in decision-making is affirmed but there is

increasing attention given to rights in these documents which presuppose the expression of children's views.

In Bulgaria, the National Strategy 'Vision for Deinstitutionalization of Children in the Republic of Bulgaria' (2010) mentions participation and the rights of children to live with their parents, the HealthCare Act (2014), National Health Strategy (2020), National Program for Improving Maternal and Child Health (2014-2020) and The Healthcare Act (last amended in 2016) sets out the general provisions on the rights of children as patients and their right for child healthcare. In Lithuania, most documents do not mention the direct participation of families and young people in their implementation with the exception of the Law on Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania and the Law on the Family Strengthening of the Republic of Lithuania.

#### *Participation as a right*

In the German case, while not necessarily mentioned in government reports, participation is considered a comprehensive principle, and is generally defined by German law, such as in the Youth Welfare Law (Eighth Book of the Social Code (SGB VIII) and the UN Conventions of the Rights of the Child and in the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, are both ratified by the Federal Republic of Germany. In this context, children and young people have the right to contact the youth welfare office in all matters of education and development, and the right to be involved in all public youth welfare decisions that affect them (depending on their level of development).

In Sweden there is a strong emphasis on children's rights when participation is mentioned in various reports. These include the Governmental report on the UN Convention on the Rights of the child and Swedish law (2020), and the Proposition to incorporate the UN Convention on the rights of the child into Swedish law (2017-2018).

In the Czech Republic, the Action Plan for Implementation of National Strategy of Protection of Children Rights (2018) included a goal to increase the general awareness of children's rights among adults as well as children, and the creation of opportunities for children and young people to participate in the decisions on matters that concern and influence them.

#### *Participation in decision-making processes*

Some respondent countries gave accounts of participation in decision-making processes. The Albanian National Strategy for Children (2001-2005) promotes participation in decision-making. The Albania National Action Plan for children (2012-2015) also aimed to strengthen the institutional structures that monitor and report on the implementation of children's rights in national and regional level, and the promotion of inclusive policies which take in consideration

the protection and inclusion of children. In Montenegro, the Strategy on the Establishment of the Right of the Child (2019-2023) focuses on children's participation in decision making and the processes central to children's rights, including a reform of the Council for Children's Rights, and increasing data sharing amongst NGOs to support implementation, monitoring and analysis. The Montenegrin Strategy of Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence (2017-2021) also stresses the need for expansion of rights in child protection approaches, including their participation, and the participation of the public. The Spanish National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (2013–2016) makes provisions for the participation of children in mechanisms to ensure their influence in decisions that affect their lives. In Portugal parents' participation in their children's curricula is mandated by the Inclusive Education Law while in Malta, The National Inclusive Education Framework (2019) promotes the active participation of all learners in decision making and encourages a school-parent partnership in assessing learners needs.

#### *Participation in protection and welfare proceedings*

In Bulgaria, children's and family's participation has been explicitly stated in the Child Protection Act (CPA) (2000) a key concept underlying the CPA is that the child is a legal subject and not a passive object of the care of the state and society so that hearing the child in court proceedings is obligatory. In Slovenia, the Family Code (2017) contains reference to the child's expert opinion in welfare proceedings and custody, and their right to counsel and representation. In the Maltese Minor Protection (Alternative Care) Act (2019) there is a stipulation that children will now be participating at each stage of the process and their interests will be represented by a Children's Advocate. In Albania the National Justice for Children Strategy (2017-2020) promotes children's participation in administrative or civil court proceedings.

Ireland's Child and Family Agency made a significant commitment to children's and young people's participation in the protection and welfare context and undertook a major capacity building programme in children's participation between 2015 and 2018. The Child and Family Agency has produced policy to drive the participation of children and young people in line with their rights (Child and Youth Participation Strategy 2019-2023) and also promotes parental participation in protection and welfare services via a toolkit (Parental Participation Toolkit, 2015). In Portugal, participation is mentioned in the National system for Early Childhood Intervention Law and the involvement of families is mentioned in the parenting programme Project ADELIA.

In Norway, the participation of children and families is mentioned in numerous white papers on welfare such as the Family Welfare service (2019); the Family Welfare Act (2016); Child Welfare in Norway (2000); the new Child Welfare Act (2016) and propositions regarding

Child Welfare Act reform (2016-2017). Participation is also mentioned in white papers that focus on the particular aspects of welfare services. These include papers on; the Principle of Filiation Bond in the Child Welfare Service (2012); on Cases Where Children Have Experienced Violence, Sexual Abuse and Neglect (2017); on Better Coordination of Services for Vulnerable Children and Youths (2009); about Foster Care (2015-2016); Child and Youth Protection (2001-2002), Short- and Long-term Measures against Domestic Violence and Child Violence and Abuse (2016-2017-2021) and about Parental Responsibility, Place of Residence and Contact with Both Parents after Parents' Separation (2008-2009). The main emphasis in most documents is child participation from a rights-based perspective, and parental participation is not as thoroughly described. When parents are discussed, the emphasis is on the importance of cooperation between parents and different agencies in the child welfare system. Service user participation is a way to achieve this in many documents.

Sweden mentions participation in reports relevant to the field of welfare and protection such as the; Final Report Concerning Child Welfare Reforms (2017); Government Report on Criminal Law, Protection for Children who Witness Crime Between Relatives (2019); Governmental Report on Compulsory Measures Used against Children in Psychiatric Involuntary Commitment (2017); Governmental Report Which Examines Whether the Child Rights Perspective has been Strengthened by the Custody Reform from 2006- 2017; Governmental Report on Strategies to Protect and Support Children from Human Trafficking, Exploitation, and Sexual Abuse (2015-2016); Governmental Report on How to Strengthen Children's Rights in Compulsory Treatment (2015); and a Governmental Report on Strengthening Security Against Forced Marriage and Child Marriage (2016). It is also mentioned in propositions such as Proposition on a New Form of Placement in the Social Services Act for Children and Young People aged 16-20 (2015) and a Proposition on How to Ensure Education for Students Staying at Care Homes or Hospitals (2014).

#### *Participation in policy development and implementation*

Bosnia has introduced a Law for the Better Involvement of Youth in Policymaking. Other respondent countries gave accounts of how participation in policy development or implementation occurred. In Albania, parents and children participated in the formation of The National Cyber Security Strategy (2020-2025) supported by a partnership with UNICEF Albania, who carried out a study to explore internet use and harmful experiences during internet navigation as a basis for this document. This was supplemented with awareness campaigns in school which revealed that parents were not aware of the threats faced in the online world. In Montenegro, youth are seen as one of the most important target groups, and action plans for strategies state their participation on a yearly basis. In Bulgaria the National Program on

Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection (2020) children's and citizens' participation has been mentioned in terms of the programme responses to the issue, including support services and awareness campaigns.

The Czech Republic's National Strategy of the Prevention of Violence on Children (2008-2018) considered children's interests by including their views in its formation, and the Strategy of Support of Youth (2013-2020) also included extensive consultations in the form of round tables and a national conference, including active dialogue with young people within the Czech Council for Children and Youth. The Strategy of Education Policy of the Czech Republic (2020) stated that all relevant actors including those who are in education, and their parents were allowed to participate in formulation of the document. The National Strategy of the Development of Social Services (2016-2020) supported the participation of service users through surveys, and successive Strategies of Roma Integration (2000- 2020) included public consultations, and the collection of Roma opinions on the objectives and form of the strategies.

In Slovenia, the National Youth Program (2013 - 2022) promotes the participation and representation of young people in the institutions and processes that shape their lives to encourage civic engagement and their participation is monitored by the Child Observatory. In Moldova, the Law on Youth (2016) regulates the principles and goals of youth policies and interventions, including participation. In addition to this, the National Strategy for Youth Sector Development (2020) establishes participation as one of the four strategic areas of focus. Moldova also released a U-Report real-time social messaging tool was launched, enabling communication between young people and decision makers. It has engaged more than 20,000 users, making it the third-largest U-Report community in the ECARO region.

Malta mentions the participation of children and families in policy development in the National Strategic Policy for Positive Parenting (2016-2024) which is supported by a dedicated task force for this policy and the Office of the Commissioner for Children. It is also mentioned in the Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Strategy (2017) which sought the views of service users on difficulties encountered when accessing the services. The National Adoption Strategy for Children and their Families (2019-2022) promoted children's active participation in this strategy in order to improve adoption services. The Sustainable Communities, Housing for Tomorrow policy (2019) sought service user participation to ensure needs are addressed at the planning, design and implementation phase of this policy.

In Spain, the National Strategic Plans for Childhood and Adolescence (2006–2010) & (2013-2016) supported the participation of children and families in order to consider their needs and interests so as to increase their quality of life and foster the full development of their capabilities as active subjects of their rights. At a regional level, the Plan for Children and

Adolescents of La Rioja (2018-2021) has a human rights-based approach that establishes the strategies for child and adolescent programs in this region.

In Ireland, the National Children's Strategy (2000) and Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (2014) and the National Youth Strategy (2015) promotes children's participation in policy and all other matters that affect them while the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making (2015) provides a road map that is bolstered by a National Framework for the Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-Making (2020) that is derived from a rights based frame for practice. These policies have resulted in youth councils at national and local level to support consultation with children and young people and an online participation hub aimed at supporting participatory practice in all contexts involving children and young people. Stakeholders are supported to participate in the development of legislation through Citizens assemblies at a national level, and policy and service development at a local level through Public Participation Networks.

The UK policy provisions that mention the participation of children and families included 'Every Child Matters', and the 'Children's Plans', while the 'Best Start in Life' report promote children's, youth and parents' participation in the development of local services. In the UK, all of the devolved administrations in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland had strategies that were informed by significant community consultation with children, young people and families. These strategies have also been introduced and reviewed with participation forums and mechanisms in place to enable routine involvement of children and parents in policy decision making. For example, Northern Ireland's Children and Young People's Plan (2017-2020) aimed to promote collaboration and co-production in the planning, delivery and improvement of children's services and family support through inter-agency working, collaborative service frameworks and service user participation. The other provisions that included participation were; Getting it Right for Every Child (Scottish Government, 2021); Every Child, Every Chance: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan (Scottish Government, 2018); the Child Poverty Strategy Progress Report (Welsh Government, 2019); Draft Children's Rights Scheme (Welsh Government, 2020); and Families Matter (DHSSPS, 2009).

Sweden has reviewed the degree of participation of parents and/or youths, in forming suggestions, policies and strategies. Overall, there was a strong emphasis on children's right to express their view in matters concerning them, many referred to Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as relevant Swedish legislation, such as the Care of Young Persons (special provisions) Act and the Social Services Act. The Ombudsman for Children plays a key role in ensuring the participation of children in governmental work. However, it was

not always clear to what extent the ombudsman consulted children directly in the matter. Parent's participation was less emphasized than children's participation.

#### *Participation supported by processes*

Croatian policies such as the National Strategy for Protection Against Violence in Families (2017- 2022), the National Program for Youth (2014-2017), and the National Program for Youth (2020-2024 in progress) mention the participation of children, youth and families. While the nature of participation as discussed is not clear, Croatia has a well-developed network of Children's Councils and Youth Advisory boards that collaborate with decisionmakers in local authorities, fora that provide rights education for children, and an Ombudsman for children that monitors the realization of rights. The participation of the children and adolescents in Italy is ensured by an appointed member of the Italian Authority for Children and Adolescents (AGIA), who facilitates a Youth Council, whose members are drawn from schools and community and sports groups, scout groups, oratories, and sports federations and include a foreign unaccompanied minor.

#### *Participation in social and economic life*

Some respondent countries described participation in social and economic life as an aim of policy. In order to optimize 'participation 'for children and families in Germany, policy aims to reduce poverty. One of the Program implementation conditions of the Moldovan National Strategic Program in the field of demographic security is the full participation of relevant socio-economic groups. Malta promotes social participation in the National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion (2014-2024). The Spanish National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (2013–2016) aimed to support parents 'participation in the labour market, and supports child participation in social, cultural, leisure, and civic activities.

The Strategy on the Integration of Persons with Disabilities in Montenegro (2016-2020) refers to parents and children's ability to be part of the society on equal terms and participate in social and economic life, and the Strategy on Employment and Development of Human Resources (2016-2020) promotes the labour market participation of youth. The Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians (2016-2020) contains measures targeted at Roma youth. In North Macedonia, the participation of young people is mentioned in various acts and programmes, such as the Social Protection Law (2019); Social Protection Development Program (2011-2021); Program for Realization of Social Protection (2018); National strategy for Deinstitutionalization in the Republic of Macedonia (2018-2027) and the Action Plan for Employment of Young People (2015 & 2016-2020).

The Law on Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania states that its objective is to “provide an individual (family) with conditions to develop and strengthen their capabilities to solve their social problems, to maintain social relationships with society, as well as to help them overcome social exclusion.” The recent “Law on the Family Strengthening of the Republic of Lithuania” mentions that its social support and services for families “will guarantee families a help necessary to develop their capabilities to independently solve arising problems and will help strengthen possibilities for them to create a safe, healthy and sustainable environment in families.

In Bulgaria, the Pre-school, and School Education Act (2016) endorses inclusive education for children with disabilities and with special needs while parents’ participation and student government have been regulated in this Act. In Germany, the acceptance of UNCRPD as a general principle in public provision means that nationwide barrier-free structures are currently being implemented in order to foster the self-determined participation of people with disabilities in education and social life.

Norway mentions rights-based participation in white papers that refer to social inclusion such as the white paper on Childhood and Life Conditions for Children and Youth in Norway (2001-2002); on integration policy (2012-2013), and on Public Health (2014-2015). Sweden also considers participation in reports that refer to social inclusion such as Government reports on how to support young people’s establishment in society which was published in (2017 & 2018). Other Government reports include one on a new model for parental insurance which will increase equal parenting and enhance beneficial conditions for children published in 2017; one on a collective strategy for alcohol, narcotics, doping and tobacco politics in (2015); one on measures to ensure that all young people begin and complete a high school education (2016); and one on inquiry into power, intersectionality and structural discrimination (2006), and propositions such as; the Proposition on Legal Changes to Prevent Migrant Family Separation (2009).

#### *Where participation in policy is underdeveloped*

Sweden, Italy, Spain, Romania, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Bosnia Herzegovina affirm that the interests of children and their families have been represented indirectly with NGOs in the context of policy development, however, participation in policy development and implementation remains underdeveloped. In Serbia, France, Austria Poland, and Latvia there is no mention of the participation of children and families in relevant policy provisions or evidence of participation in practice.

## **7 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000**

This section discusses the various forms of child and family support across the respondent countries, beginning with an overview of priorities in policy, before considering the range of support and provisions in various national contexts. This will be followed by an overview of funding, before reflecting on the evaluation of policies and their implementation, and the data or evidence that each country can draw on to support policy development and implementation.

### *Priorities in child welfare and family policy*

Beginning with priorities in child welfare and family policy, child protection is a key area in many respondent surveys (Malta, Moldova, Hungary, Latvia, Serbia, Romania, North Macedonia, Austria, Slovenia, Hungary, and Ireland). In terms of welfare and protection Italy, Spain, Moldova, and Ireland are moving towards early intervention and prevention and interdisciplinary responses while France is seeking greater parent and child participation in interventions. Tackling child exploitation is a concern in the UK, while Lithuania aims to address violence against children and reduce the number of children living in at risk families. Albania is focused on workforce development in this area while increasing its capacity to monitor vulnerable and marginalized populations. Gender-based and domestic violence is an area identified for action in Malta and the UK.

In Ireland and Lithuania, a review of legislation governing child protection and welfare is an intended area of action. In recent times Ireland and Malta have restructured welfare service agencies. Whereas Malta focused on their disability service, Ireland created a focused child and family agency, with organisations in both arenas aiming to ensure holistic response to the various needs of their targeted service users.

The vindication of children's rights through policy is a concern given wide attention across various jurisdictions (Moldova, Italy, Romania, Norway, the Czech Republic, Austria, and Slovenia). Italy is prioritizing the development of strategies for infancy and adolescence in line with the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Romania also intends to develop rights-based strategy for children, while Moldova's priority concern is the establishment of an Ombudsman Institute, to effectively monitor the implementation of standards. The areas in which children's rights are to be given consideration include economic and educational policy (Italy), for children with disabilities and those deprived of parental care (Serbia) and participation in policy formation processes (Bulgaria). In the UK, the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland priorities also include promoting children's rights.

Children's development (Romania, Norway, Austria) wellbeing (Malta, Hungary, Spain, Slovenia) and the wellbeing of their families (Spain, Norway, Czech Republic, Slovenia) are

issues that are given weight in the survey responses. Social inclusion is a policy response to these issues in Lithuania, Malta, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Albania, and this response is targeted at children in particular in Malta and Hungary. The reduction of child and family poverty is a target of policy in France, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. A concern with family resources is articulated in a focus on social protection and assistance (Ireland, Sweden, Romania, Czech Republic, Moldova), family benefits (Poland, Montenegro, Moldova, Latvia), and child benefits (Montenegro, Lithuania, Moldova).

Other prioritized supports for parents include maternity benefits (Lithuania) parental leave (Croatia, UK) and material aids (Moldova). Spain will focus on the labour market while welfare to work schemes are a target of UK policy. Moldova, the Czech Republic, and Germany intend to ensure family incomes support a decent living. In Latvia, Norway, the Czech Republic, and Germany the promotion of a better work life balance is a stated goal. Gender equality measures to ensure the fair participation of women in the labour market are discussed by Malta, Albania, Spain, Bulgaria, and Norway and supports for lone parents is another area of policy focus in the Czech Republic. The UK is narrowing its policy focus to target high need families and children, and in Portugal there is a move away from state responsibility to encouraging NGOs and families to take more responsibility for the needs of families in poverty.

Attention is paid to the quality of parenting leading to a focus on the promotion of parenting skills (Latvia and North Macedonia) and positive parenting in particular (Malta, Spain, Italy, Czech Republic, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland). Malta and Lithuania are promoting and supporting adoption, while Poland is focused on family foster care and Latvia is focused on increasing the registration of new-borns. Influencing the birth rate emerged as a concern in Poland, Hungary, Latvia, Bulgaria, North Macedonia and the Czech Republic. Family planning is also an area of focus in Latvia.

The development of services that support families is widely considered a priority for policy (Poland, Lithuania, Albania, Spain, Sweden, Serbia, Norway, Germany, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland). This includes services for children (Moldova), those that provide aid (Moldova), support (Sweden) childcare (Sweden, Poland, Germany, UK) and youth work (Spain). The organisation of services including their accessibility (Latvia and Malta), and decentralization (Malta) is intended to increase community access to services. The development of foster care systems and alternative care is intended to reduce institutionalization in Albania, Bulgaria, and the Czech Republic.

Education is also an area targeted for action in Serbia and Romania amongst others. In particular a reform of early education is a priority in Montenegro, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Germany, while inclusive education is the focus in Poland, Montenegro, Malta, Albania, Bulgaria, Germany.

Latvia and Portugal intend to introduce free school meals, and Portugal will also provide breakfast for families in extreme poverty.

Disability is an area to be prioritized for action (Ireland, North Macedonia, the Czech Republic, Malta, Latvia, and Montenegro) including supports for people with disability to live independently with financial aid (Malta) and support for children with disabilities (Latvia). Linked to this is a focus on health in Ireland, UK, Latvia, Sweden, Bulgaria, Serbia and Romania, and maternal health care in particular in Latvia and the UK. Finally, housing is an area of attention in Ireland, Malta, Albania, and Spain, with a particular focus on homelessness in Ireland, and financing to support housing access in Malta and Latvia. The environment has been cited as a concern by Ireland and North Macedonia.

#### *Main types of family provision and support*

This section provides an overview of the main types of family provision and support across the respondent countries. There is widely implemented financial support available that is targeted to families in need of social assistance e.g., low income, vulnerable groups (Poland, Montenegro, Lithuania, Malta, Moldova, Italy, Albania, Latvia, Spain, Bulgaria, Serbia, Portugal, North Macedonia, Germany, Slovenia, Montenegro, Bosnia Herzegovina, the UK) or those with larger families (Hungary, France, North Macedonia, Slovenia, Montenegro). These may be subject to welfare to work, or activation conditions as in the UK and Hungary. Some countries have child benefits that may be universal (Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Moldova, Italy, Hungary, Serbia, Romania, Norway, Austria, Croatia, Germany, and the UK), some of which may have a lower age limit for cessation (Moldova, Hungary) or may be subject to income considerations (Montenegro, Hungary, North Macedonia, Czech Republic, Germany, Slovenia). Tax credits are identified as another way of providing financial relief to families (Norway, the Czech Republic, Latvia). There is also an allowance intended to encourage the employment of youth in North Macedonia.

Financial support is often available in special circumstances, such as after the birth of a child (Poland, Montenegro, Lithuania, Moldova, Italy, Albania, Latvia, Czech Republic, Slovenia), though this is sometimes subject to income limits (France, Montenegro, UK, Scotland). Material support, such as food and milk vouchers, may also be provided to low-income parents in the UK. Maternity leave benefits are widely available in many jurisdictions (Poland, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Albania, Hungary, Latvia, Romania, Portugal, North Macedonia, the Czech Republic, Austria, Croatia, Slovenia, UK) as are paternity leave benefits (Ireland, Lithuania, Albania, Hungary, Portugal, Czech Republic, Austria, Croatia, Slovenia, and the UK). In Ireland and UK parental leave is available, while in France, Latvia, Sweden, Bulgaria, Norway, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia payments are available to support a parent take of a child in early

years. In the UK, shared parental leave for new parents is possible and there is a right to request flexible working and time off for family reasons. In Lithuania, support for working parents is less developed. Support for adoptive or foster parents is also available in some countries. Malta and Bulgaria provide financial benefits and leave to adoptive parents, in addition to this Malta pays an allowance for orphans, while allowances for foster children are paid in North Macedonia and the Czech Republic, and one-off cash allowances are paid in Serbia.

Some jurisdictions provide financial support for a family experiencing difficulties, for example in the provision of care and education through nursing and special care allowances (Poland) or support for families caring for incapacitated or disabled members (Ireland, Malta, Hungary, Latvia, Serbia, North Macedonia, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Albania, Montenegro, and the UK). In Moldova help is available to repair housing or buy fuel. Other jurisdictions provide assistance with housing payments (Ireland, Hungary the Czech Republic, and the UK). In terms of lone parents, a dedicated payment is available in Ireland, Hungary, and France, while there is an alimony fund for those who do not receive childcare support due to poor enforcement in Poland. Portugal provides food funds when the other parent fails to supply support.

Other financial supports include payment to encourage participation in early education (Poland, Scotland), or allowances for families with children in school in general (Hungary, Austria). In Ireland, France, Scotland and Portugal, a targeted school age allowance is available that can assist with clothing and footwear for low-income school children. Subsidized youth travel is available in Scotland, and there is free travel and transport for school children and students available in Malta. Transport and textbooks are also provided in Portugal, but this is limited to those who have a low income. Some countries also provide financial benefits for older students that may be universal in Malta, or targeted as in Albania and Portugal, including for example scholarships for talented students and school children in North Moldova. In the UK, all low-income children qualify for school meals. In Poland, a family card provides discounts in public and private institutions, while Portugal provides a dentist voucher for low-income children.

Early years services are provided in Ireland, Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia and day care is available in Bosnia Herzegovina. There are universal free preschool or childcare places in Ireland, the Czech Republic, and Malta, although these may be of limited availability in the Czech Republic. There are subsidized early year care/education places provided in France, Bulgaria, Serbia, Portugal, North Macedonia, Norway, Czech Republic, Germany, and Slovenia. Subsidized places are also available subject to time and income limits in the UK and Scotland. Bulgaria has insufficient kindergarten places, however in Poland service providers can also access financial support to address this issue. In Lithuania

access to early years services can vary regionally. After-school places are also provided in Malta, and the Czech Republic, and these are subsidized in Ireland to ensure affordability. Various youth services including summer programmes are also available in Malta and Ireland.

Health care is another aspect of service provision relevant to children and families. While universal health care may be provided during pregnancy and the early years in Ireland and the UK, a more limited form is available in Bulgaria, and North Macedonia. Poland also provides supports for pregnant mothers and expectant families.

Child protection and welfare services are provided in Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Ireland, Hungary, Norway, Albania, and the UK, while mental health services and addiction support services are also considered pertinent parts of the family support provisions in Ireland. Families can access home support in Norway, Italy, Ireland, Bosnia Herzegovina, and Hungary, where families in need receive targeted assistance. Support can also be accessed through various agencies in community settings targeting disadvantaged or at-risk families (Ireland, Malta, Moldova, Italy, Hungary, Latvia, Spain, Bulgaria, Serbia, Norway, Czech Republic, and UK), including parenting support (Italy, Latvia, Ireland, Spain), family counselling/mediation (Norway, Czech Republic), and support for children with disabilities (Malta, Ireland, Spain, UK) and support for disadvantaged jobseekers (Malta). Families and children can also access support in educational settings in Italy and Hungary. In Albania and Moldova, the service provision landscape is underdeveloped, but this is acknowledged as an important area of development.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the intent is to establish a large number of institutions of social protection which will provide services such as: homes for children and youth without parental care; homes for children and youth with disabilities; homes for persons with disabilities. In addition to these residential centres day-care centres are intended to provide assistance for children and young users of social protection system, the adult users of social protection systems, as well as the social rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, the education of children and youth, and counselling services.

#### *Funding sources & practitioners*

Most of the activities that support families are funded by governments (Slovenia, Austria, Poland, Malta, Moldova, Albania, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and the UK), if not all as is the case in Lithuania, France, Norway, and Croatia. In Bosnia Herzegovina, the majority of social protection services are governmental with private sector provision limited to elderly care and counselling centres. Public policy organisations are the most visible in terms of day care and the running of specialised institutions in Poland, while NGO service provision is an emerging

trend. However, in Ireland, Norway, Bulgaria, and the Czech Republic the governments fund NGOs to deliver services. In Ireland there is also a strong NGO sector that delivers disability, child, and family support services. In Poland and Ireland, NGOs also provide leisure and childcare programmes.

In Ireland, funding can be distributed through the child and family agency, local development companies, education and training boards or the health service. Local authorities and Municipalities may also act as mediators of funds in Moldova, Sweden, Portugal, Norway, Germany, and Bulgaria. Funding can also be delivered through government agencies, and the commissioner for voluntary organisations fulfil this role in Malta. Applying for funding can be competitive in the Czech Republic. In Bosnia and Herzegovina funding for social services is drawn from public, NGO and private institutions. In Albania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Portugal, and Slovenia international funding organisations are a funding source, while donations may also fund NGO's fund social care services in Albania, Hungary, Spain, Romania, Portugal, and Moldova.

#### *Monitoring policy and evaluating implementation*

The monitoring of policy implementation and its subsequent evaluation is often the purview of relevant ministries, government agencies or public administration bodies in which oversight is maintained through the production of regular reports (Norway, Albania, Sweden, Serbia, North Macedonia, Romania, Malta, Hungary, France, and the UK). For example, Austria monitors public welfare provision in this way. However, while this is a function of a dedicated Ministry in Lithuania it has yet to be achieved. In Poland, the evaluation of policies and their implementation are not always publicly accessible. In Montenegro, the Czech Republic, and Ireland, action plans are subject to periodic review. However, in the Czech Republic objectives and responsibilities are often so vague that implementation cannot be adequately monitored. In Croatia, the government is open to scholars' advice, and although strategic documents contain concrete indicators, these are mostly not monitored, and programs are typically not evaluated meaning that reforms are often ad-hoc.

Specialist bodies such as monitoring committees are set up to oversee the implementation of specific public policy to ensure good evaluation practices and data collection as in Albania and Hungary. Task forces monitor the implementation of policy in Malta, while the courts oversee the implementation of the Minor Protection Act. In France the court of auditors, and the general inspectorate of social affairs publish regular reports that can lead to reorientation of policies. In North Macedonia, an Inspection Council monitors the application of over 200 laws and bylaws arising from them. In Norway, Croatia, and Ireland an Ombudsman monitors and evaluate the delivery of children's policy and responds to complaints, while in

Malta the Commissioner for Children monitors the children's strategy. Meanwhile, Ireland has a dedicated statutory body that monitors standards disability services, children's services, and healthcare.

In other cases, specialist research institutes and organisations are involved with monitoring the social conditions and circumstances of childhood and evaluation (Germany, Ireland, Slovenia, Norway, Austria, Latvia) and collecting relevant statistics (France and Germany). This can also include longitudinal surveys of children's development (Ireland) their quality of life (Slovenia) and health (Germany) or other issues more targeted to the challenges of childhood, such as educational support, day care needs, or child endangerment (Germany). In Germany, such institutions may publish regular reports. Other institutions are focused specifically on policy research. The Austrian Institute for Family Research evaluates the interdependencies between policy measures and their outcomes, while the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) in Ireland has a broader scope relating to policy but still has relevance to the area of family support and childhood. In some cases, these institutes are engaged by the government or ministries relevant to their focus of research (Slovenia). For example, in Italy the Department for Family Policies uses the data provided by the National Observatory on Childhood and Adolescence and the Innocenti Institute in collaboration with Ministry of Labour and Social Security.

In Spain there is an increasing use of expert selected evidence-based programmes, however there is still a concern about the quality standards and evaluation of the professionals' work as services conduct self-evaluation. In Albania, Lithuania, and Ireland, NGOs and services themselves contribute to the evaluation of provisions, and this can include collaboration with specialists in the field in Albania. In Malta, NGOs provide oversight through reporting practices in the field of housing. The involvement of NGOs in the formation and monitoring of policy and evaluation of implementation is being promoted in Romania, however in Lithuania, the potential of this approach is limited due to a lack of power held by the NGOs, and a lack of researcher support.

There is no systemic programme for evaluation as yet in Hungary, and in Moldova monitoring services and programmes is limited to whether deadlines are met. This is further hampered by an underdeveloped information infrastructure that would enhance evaluation and review. Representatives of Italy and Albania noted challenges arising from the implementation of programs and policies at a local level which makes data collection and review difficult. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the fragmentation of the system poses a challenge to the implementation and review of policies due to difficulties defining responsibilities. Ireland noted that apart from a reduction in poverty, outcomes for children are difficult to assess.

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### *Limitations in national and official data and statistics*

Many respondents' countries endeavour to produce quality data. In Slovenia, Norway, and Sweden the collation of statistics is a professional independent activity. In Lithuania, the Department of Statistics presents exhaustive data on some social indicators that reflect child and family wellbeing and living standards. This can include income and poverty, families at risk of poverty, family support and social protection, children in public care, violence against children, family formation and stability, and fertility. Serbia has been found compliant with the European Statistics Code of Practice and Hungary reports that the data infrastructure is well developed and participation in all major data collections coordinated by Eurostat makes it possible to analyse social trends in the overall population and major subgroups. Ireland is also well served on data from the census, research bodies and the child and family agencies own records and data collection activities. Furthermore, there are two repositories for social science where national data can be accessed. The UK collects high quality data, and statistics is reported on issues such as family household income, parental employment trends, family household composition, children's health and educational outcomes. However, there has also been a reduction in the range of official statistics and policy targets routinely collated and published in relation to children and young people's wellbeing.

Some countries reported deficiencies relating to categories of data which have implications for evidence-based policy. For example, Italy has insufficient data on children removed from families while Serbia must improve its registry of disabled children and data on the education of adolescents and children. There are gaps in knowledge relating to marriage and cohabitation patterns in Malta, and family demographics in Moldova, Latvia, and Germany, particularly in terms of high-risk families, maltreatment, and abuse. Croatia noted that despite improvement in data collections, there were gaps relating to family and parenting support. As far as the identification of vulnerable groups in Austria is concerned, there is detailed data on the demographics of foreign citizens but there is only vague information about Austrian nationals with migrant backgrounds and children whose parents only recently moved to Austria. Portugal also has limited data available on ethnicity.

Insufficient data collection by government actors, particularly at a local level in (Poland, Montenegro, Moldova) hampers reflection on service and support provision. Furthermore, Portugal has noted that the decentralisation of data dispersed through several institutions makes it harder to compile and have access to rigorous, comparable data. Data collection methods have implications for its quality as in Moldova, where indicators were not always directly related to the issue addressed, and/or did not have a constant presence in public statistical works and sociological measurements. Bosnia and Herzegovina also reported issues

with inconsistent poorly organized data sets. Meanwhile Portugal and North Macedonia note that most data available is quantitative in nature which does not allow for a reflection on complexity and diversity in terms of service provision. Malta has noted that a low population count may affect Eurostat indicator reliability.

## **8 Overview of policy, practice, research: developments, challenges & gaps**

This section contains an overview of the national respondent's reflection on policy, practice, and research. The overview begins with a review of policy developments, gaps in policy and challenges for policy across the various jurisdictions. The focus then shifts to service developments, gaps, and challenges, before considering the gaps in research that respondents have identified. This section concludes with a review of national responses to the COVID-19 pandemic as a priority area for action across various jurisdictions.

### *Policy developments*

France and Spain have directed policy attention to parenting support, with Spain focusing on positive parenting, and France targeting disadvantaged groups. Albania has made progress on developing policy around children's rights and strengthening protection measures from domestic violence for women and children gender equality, cyber security, integration of Roma and Egyptians, and reproductive health. Lithuania has established a National Council of Families to oversee the implementation of supports for families as a local level. Bosnia Herzegovina has rolled out a Social Protection and Inclusion (SPI) model in one-third of municipalities supported by the European Union Delegation and UNICEF. The SPI model is a comprehensive, multifaceted, and long-term intervention, with incremental goals in key areas of social protection and inclusion policies and services for children. It is designed to help eradicate social exclusion, child poverty, discrimination, and inequality, to help everyone access basic social services in communities, and to meet international child rights obligations. Slovenia notes the high quality of life experienced by its children and intends to preserve its suite of quality supports for families and children. Bulgaria notes a reduction in the numbers of children in institutions due a development of an alternative care system.

### *Gaps in policy*

Romania has said that new policies are needed to create a dedicated secretariat for families to collaborate with other agencies and NGOS to support families. The creation of a commission with parliament could analyse and review legislative provisions relating to the family. North Macedonia, Portugal and Lithuania identify a need to develop targeted national strategies for families to include a more holistic, integrative approach to practice. The lack of an overarching, progressive and ambitious policy strategy and framework in the English context means that

policies and reforms have been developed in relatively fragmented ways across government departments and with a focus on specific needs or discrete targeted measures. Moldova has also noted that there is no overarching family policy and outlines a need to consider the impact of policies that are targeted at individuals on family units, while Poland notes a need for a clear legal framework for family support. Bosnia Herzegovina lacks family policy at a national level, although there is a wide range of strategies and laws related to social inclusion and protection at a local level.

Moldova has expressed a need to consider childhood beyond certain categories in policy formation. In Serbia no strategic document defines child development and welfare. The vindication of children's rights is a challenge for Polish and French policy makers. For Poland, this is an area that needs attention particularly as rights vindications are missing from the disability and foster care sector. Furthermore, newly drafted migration policy is not yet in place and consideration of the best interests of foreign children is missing from policy. In Bulgaria, there is still a lack of understanding what authentic child participation means which must be addressed by policy.

France has identified a need to recognise different family forms and make progress on equality between men and women. Moldova has identified a need to give attention to gender-based issues and challenges over the life course. Lithuania and North Macedonia have also identified a need for policies that support a work-life balance and working parents. The introduction of parental and maternity leave is needed in North Macedonia, as is part-time work to support women's engagement in the labour market. Norway has noticed that there is a blind spot in policy concerning pluralism in society while Latvia's policy is focused on the birth-rate and economically active families leaving disadvantaged families behind.

### *Policy challenges*

The challenges posed to policymakers across the respondent countries include issues such as poverty and social exclusion for certain groups in society as in (North Macedonia, Hungary, Albania, Montenegro, Lithuania, Poland). Croatia has identified a need to consider its social assistance package to address the circumstances of low income and unemployed families. Bosnia Herzegovina note that the social protection system is underdeveloped, and the effectiveness of social transfers is limited. Social benefits are extremely low and insufficient to fulfil basic needs and targeting of social transfers is inadequate, making their effects on poverty reduction very limited. In Bulgaria and North Macedonia targeted measures are also failing to make a difference, and Serbia struggles to address child poverty. In Hungary, the situation of the most vulnerable is worsening due to a focus on economically active families. Norway and France have also noticed a deepening income inequality due to a focus on policy measures

such as tax cuts that fail to consider low-income families. Malta and the Czech Republic note the persistence of poverty in lone-parent families. The exclusion of children with disabilities is very pronounced in Bulgaria, and aid for this cohort is insufficient in Poland. In Slovenia there is still unequal access to guaranteed rights, health, and education for certain populations due to their citizenship, residence status, ethnicity, economic status, sexual orientation, and age (immigrant, Roma, materially deprived, LGBT). These groups often face multiple challenges, e.g., poverty, language barriers, disabilities, invisibility, discriminated ethnicity, inadequate housing, weak social networks, and are not provided with suitable sufficient support. Lithuania also discusses a lack of attention given to the dimension of gender equality and notes that the Law on Strengthening the Family (2017) could be viewed as an encroachment on gender equality and diversity of families. This law also disadvantages single-parent families and the partnerships of people of the same sex and focuses on the so-called “traditional family”. Montenegro has identified a need to promote a modern public perspective regarding families and children.

In Malta, the labour market inclusion of disabled people remains low, and there is a risk of gender imbalance in the workplace as women avail of family friendly workplace measures. In Croatia it is a lack of paternity leave and attitudes to child rearing that may generate an imbalance in work force participation. Sweden also has lower uptakes of paternal leave. In the Czech Republic the rate of participation of mothers in the labour market and childcare provision is limited. The issue of domestic violence is an area of concern in Poland, and the current political debate on this issue centres on a withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention.

Challenges in the area of education are another area of concern, Malta has a high rate of early school leaving. Inequitable educational outcomes are a challenge for Hungary that is linked to selectivity and segregation in the education system. Educational attainment levels are a concern in Italy, and consideration is given to the role of targeted benefits in supporting improved educational outcomes.

Respondents also discuss systemic challenges for policy implementation in the service arena. In the Czech Republic and Poland, the co-ordination of policy responses across different departments and services causes challenges for service provision. In Norway, discretionary decision-making impacts on the delivery of services. The Norwegian system has also been criticised as intrusive and there is a concern that a stronger emphasis on rights can transfer responsibility for children’s development to the state especially if attention is given to socioeconomic situation of families. Service sustainability is an issue in Serbia and Bulgaria where concerns have been raised about policy implementation. Sustainability is also an issue in Albania, which has called for the monitoring and review of resource allocation to address this

issue. In some cases, service systems require further development. Compared to other EU countries, in the Czech Republic many children still live-in institutional care facilities, as while reform of the system has taken place it does not yet function well. In Ireland, the health system poses one of the biggest challenges to policy makers, as in Poland where unsatisfactory maternal health care has implications for the infant mortality rate.

It has been noted by some respondents that policy development and implementation are affected by political landscapes, and agendas, that are shifting (Portugal, Serbia, Spain, Italy), or have dominant interests (Poland). Spain suggests a bottom-up approach to provide stability in terms of practice as a resolution to this challenge of changing policy agendas dominating service development. Other policy challenges identified relate to resources (Albania, Lithuania, Italy, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia Herzegovina, and the UK) and staff capacity for social services in (Albania, Poland, Bulgaria, Malta, Hungary, Portugal, Montenegro). In Bosnia Herzegovina, the implementation of a recent Policy on Protection of Families with Children is not yet enforced due to inadequate procedures, standards and referral practices, and a general lack of coordination resulting from fragmentation of the system.

Service reform is slow (Bulgaria) or unsatisfactory (Hungary) and funding reform is recommended by Montenegro. In the UK funding for social support is being reduced, while Spain and Ireland have low investment in social services compared to other developed EU countries. In Ireland and the UK health, disability and housing are under resourced. In Malta there are long waiting lists for certain services for children with disabilities and for those with mental health difficulties, and Poland has insufficient mental health service provision. Italy notes that the impact has been the most visible in the serious obstacles encountered in the interventions concerning the protection of children's and adolescents' rights.

#### *Gaps and challenges in service provision*

There are some positive service developments in respondent accounts. Spain is fortunate to have a robust network of NGOs and volunteer movements providing support to families facing adverse circumstances or with special needs. Albania has established a state agency on Child Rights and Protection that supports families and children, and there are now several units throughout the country. In Germany, which is a federalised system, service provision to families is supported by interdisciplinary collaborative help systems at a municipal level. However, in Bosnia Herzegovina an integrative/universal approach does not exist, and services are fragmented and highly bureaucratic.

There is still an outstanding goal to develop supports for high-risk families across a continuum of need in Germany, and reorientation towards early intervention has yet to be

realised at a local level in Spain. In the UK, the early intervention system is under strain due to lack of capacity as is the family support sector. In Albania and Poland, the main forms of family support are financial aids, and a support system has yet to be developed. Lithuania lacks a network of NGOs that might provide service support. Serbia also described how policies that support deinstitutionalisation have not been supported by the development of alternative forms of care or family support. There is also a lack of parenting support services and programmes in Croatia and North Macedonia. In Sweden there is a lack of services to meet the needs of immigrant families and recent initiatives have yet to yield evidence-based learning. It has also been suggested that there is a need for services to engage disadvantaged communities, particularly immigrants. Bulgaria has identified a need for programmes and staff training to combat domestic violence.

In the UK the educational and additional education needs supports are insufficient for demand while in North Macedonia early childhood education remains underdeveloped. Kindergarten attendance is mandatory but preschool interventions are missing for disadvantaged children. Sufficient childcare places in general are also limited in Hungary, Croatia, and Lithuania. This is further exacerbated by affordability in Croatia. In Albania, early childcare is subsidised, but the child to staff ratio remains too high which is a risk to the quality of service. While a new initiative has been set up to provide homework clubs with the aim of supporting parents as a form of childcare, this is limited to 20 schools in five cities. In some countries access to services (Moldova, Hungary) like childcare (Hungary, North Macedonia, Lithuania) and health services (North Macedonia) is limited in rural areas.

A lack of parental involvement in school life has been noted in Malta and Bulgaria. Malta has further identified a need to prevent bullying and discrimination against non-Maltese children and reduce academic stress amongst all students. Family education systems in schools and marriage courses are areas for development in North Macedonia.

### *The COVID-19 pandemic*

The pandemic has created challenges for policy and practice across Europe. In particular this has caused disruption to, and challenges for the education (Poland, Hungary) and care of children (Moldova, Hungary). Educational inequalities have been revealed in Moldova, and in Latvia this has been linked to a lack of access to technology and rural locations. The closure of education and care services has affected some working families (Moldova), while others have lost income due to loss of employment and risk of poverty have been amplified (Moldova, North Macedonia, Slovenia) particularly in rural areas (Latvia), for those who can't work from home (Czech Republic), and mothers (North Macedonia). Children have been left unsupervised if their

parents are working in Moldova, or under the care of a remote social service if parents are hospitalised due to illness. In Hungary parental leave options were unchanged.

Access to health care has been an issue in Slovenia, while inequities of access to health and social services has been amplified in Moldova. Mental health and wellbeing have been negatively affected (Albania) during this crisis, particularly for mothers (Czech Republic), large families (North Macedonia) and for children (Albania). There has also been an increase in incidences of violence against women and children (Albania, Czech Republic, North Macedonia, Moldova, Slovenia) and implications for elderly people and residents in care homes in Slovenia.

States have responded to the consequences of the pandemic on family life by increasing financial support (Albania, Moldova, North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Slovenia, the UK) and material aid (Moldova, North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Portugal, Albania). NGOs also responded to poverty with food aid that was targeted to full-time students, large families, and one-off payments were made to pensioners, and recipients of social assistance. However, in Bulgaria not all families in need have benefited from targeted assistance due to administrative criteria. North Macedonia and Albania have also targeted support at vulnerable groups, while Portugal has instigated supports for families who could not work remotely or where the coronavirus was contracted and extended social assistance payments in other cases.

In Moldova and Slovenia social services have adapted by providing remote social support, and the Moldovan state has worked to boost capacity. North Macedonia has increased social supports for foster carers and families with disabled family members while the UK has increased funding for local authorities to provide children's services. In Bulgaria children with special needs are a particularly affected vulnerable group because of the lack of on-site training and care. In Bulgaria and Malta consideration is now being given as to how to support the welfare of children with disabilities and their parents at this time. In Slovenia schools for children with behavioural and emotional disorders remained open.

The UK respondent has outlined how it is of vital importance to properly assess and respond to rising needs for social, employment and housing support that will arise when the temporary measures end and the longer-term impacts of the pandemic on the labour market, services and communities are felt.

### *Research*

In Sweden, the government's social department has developed a national strategy to increase the quality of support to parents and families and there is a need for knowledge regarding families to support programme development. It is suggested that this approach should be underpinned by a child rights approach and the principle of equality. In Bulgaria there is no

institution or service that develops knowledge regarding families or children of monitors their needs, nor evidence of programmes that work. In Spain, Hungary, Poland, and Lithuania there is still a weak evaluative culture and Montenegro lacks analysis of policies and their implementation. In Spain this effects the identification of programmes that work and the incorporation of families' perspectives in service reviews. In Albania most research is conducted with the aid of NGOs so there is a need to develop state capacity. Romania suggests that an institute for families could support and co-ordinate efforts by a secretariat for families and NGOs to collect data relating to families, while the creation of a commission with parliament could analyse and review legislative provisions relating to the family.

Access to data is also an issue in Hungary, and there is a lack of comparable data in Malta regarding mental health, wellbeing, participation, experience of violence, and child protection policies and no reliable statistics are available on new family forms. In Albania, research on parenting, parenting intervention, and evidence-based parenting programs are almost non-existent. Bulgaria has identified research on the diversity of family forms with its legal, socio-economic, and psychosocial implications on the quality of life and children's wellbeing. In addition to this Bulgaria has said that parents' active involvement and children's participation in decision-making processes are research areas requiring attention.

Please see the following section where the national reports from participating countries are presented in full for further information.

## 1 ALBANIA - National report on family support policy & provision

**Oriola Hamzallari, Ana Uka, Edmond Dragoti**

The data provided in the answers below is to be based on official data, policy documents, relevant literature, and websites.

### 1.1 Trends and issues related to demography

#### *Fertility rates*

The fertility rate in Albania remained unchanged from 2010 to 2015, and from 2016 until 2020 there has been a slight but stable decline.

Table 1. *Fertility rates*

Year	Fertility rate
2010	1.67
2015	1.67
2016	1.65
2017	1.63
2018	1.62
2019	1.60
2020	1.59
2021	1.57

#### *Percentage of the population from 0 to 14*

In 2011, Albanian percentage of the 0-14 age group was quite high, showing a stable declining trend throughout the years until 2019 (Table 3).

Table 2. *Population 14 years and under*

Year	%
2011	21.6
2015	19.0
2016	18.5
2017	18.2
2018	17.7
2019	17.2

*Percentage of population over 60 years of age*

The table shows the trend in population for the group of over 60 years of age. There is a stable increasing trend suggesting that the Albanian population is ageing at a higher speed during 2011-2019. The older population is increasing year by year. (Table 4). However, the retiring age in Albania has changed to 63 in the later years, compared to 60 as it was before. All data regarding the aging of population are taken using the period 60 or over 60 years as that was the age of retirement during these years. Nowadays, the age of retirement has changed; women retire at 62, while men retire at 65.

Table 3. *Population over 60 years of age*

Year	%
2011	15.5
2015	17.6
2016	18.2
2017	18.9
2018	19.6

2019      20.4

*Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities*

According to the Social Inclusion Policy Document 2016-2020 (Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, 2015), the most vulnerable groups identified in Albania are Roma and Egyptians, LGBT persons, People with Disabilities, and Children.

The groups most at risk of social exclusion are women, men, children, youth that belong to the most vulnerable groups that are Roma and Egyptians, people with disabilities, the elderly, victims of trafficking, and unaccompanied minors (UNDP).

*Migration patterns*

The number of Albanian emigrants has declined during the period 2014-2016, but there has been an increasing curve of Albanian emigrants during 2017, a slight decline in 2018, and again a fast increase of emigration levels during 2019. There is a non-linear trend of Albanian emigration during the period 2014-2019. 2019 has been a difficult year for Albania, during which it has faced a political crisis and a fatal earthquake, which may have increased the economic insecurity of Albanians and consequently may have impacted the higher levels of emigration during 2019 (Table 5). On the other hand, according to Eurostat (2020), in 2018 35.8% of citizens from enlargement countries, who were first-time asylum applicants in the EU-28, were Albanians. Thus, Albanian citizens have shown a high interest to apply for asylum in EU countries, which may further support the trend for increased emigration in 2019 year (Eurostat, 2020).

Table 4. *Number of emigration and immigration*

Year	Emigration	Immigration
------	------------	-------------

2014	46,525	24,740
2015	41,443	20,843
2016	32,532	23,060
2017	39,905	25,003
2018	38,703	23,673
2019	43,835	20,753

Note. INSTAT Database (2020)

## 1.2 Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles, and children’s living arrangements

### *Family household types*

Some findings have been published related to household composition in Albania during the 2017-2018 period (INSTAT, 2018). The trend for household composed by 4 or less members is higher in urban areas than in rural ones, but for household composed by 5 or more members the trend is higher for rural areas than urban ones (Urban  $M=3.1$ ; Rural  $M=3.5$ ). The mean size of a household has steadily declined in Albanian context. The highest mean size was in 1979 ( $M=5.6$ ), and it has dropped to 3.9 in 2011 (INSTAT, 2015), and by the period 2017-2018, to 3.3. The downward trend concerning household size might indicate that the fertility rate is lower, but this might also be an indication of nuclearization and the individualization of the family (INSTAT, 2015), particularly in urban areas versus rural ones (INSTAT, 2018).

Households with orphans and foster children under 18 are higher in urban areas vs rural areas (Table 5).

Table 5. Household composition 2017-2018

Household composition	Residence
-----------------------	-----------

	Urban	Rural	Total
	%		
Total size households	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of usual members, of which			
0	0.1	0.2	0.2
1	11.7	7.0	9.9
2	29.1	26.4	28.1
3	20.2	19.4	19.9
4	20.2	19.9	20.1
5	11.3	14.1	12.4
6	5.4	8.4	6.6
7	1.3	3.1	2.0
8	0.3	0.8	0.4
9+	0.3	0.7	0.5
Mean size of households	3.1	3.5	3.3
Households with orphans and foster children under 18 years of age, of which			
1. Double orphans	0.2	0.2	0.2
2. Single orphans	1.2	0.9	1.0
3. Foster children	1.0	1.3	1.1
4. Foster and/or orphan children			
Number of households	9,864	5,959	15,823

Note. Institute of Statistics and Institute of Public Health (2018)

### *Marriage and divorce rates*

From 2013 to 2018, the crude marriage rate in Albania was on average eight out of every 1,000 persons (Table 6). Compared to other candidate countries, Albania has the highest crude marriage rate. Nonetheless, the trend for the crude marriage rate has increased in 2015, and experienced a slight fall during 2016-2017 followed by a slight increase in 2018. In 2019, there was a slight decrease in the marriage rate, which is similar to the 2017 rate (INSTAT, 2020).

Table 6. *Crude marriage rate*

Year	%
2013	8.2
2014	8.2
2015	8.7
2016	7.8
2017	7.9
2018	8.1
2019	7.9

Note. Eurostat (2020) & INSTAT (2020)

Whereas the crude divorce rate in Albania has a non-linear trend, slightly decreasing in 2015, in 2016 the rate increased considerably, and there is a slight decrease, and again a slight increase in 2018. However, the fluctuations in divorce rate are considered low compared to other candidate countries, and overall, the European countries (Table 7).

Table 7. *Crude divorce rate*

Year	%
2014	1.5
2015	1.3
2016	1.9
2017	1.6
2018	1.7

Note. Eurostat (2020)

*Divorces per 100 marriages*

The highest number of divorces for Albania was recorded in 2018. Despite the decline in 2015, from 2016 until 2018 a stable increase in the number of divorces was recorded. The divorce rate for Albania is below the average EU level, but compared to candidate countries, Albania's divorce rate is lower than Serbia's, but higher than the Republic of North Macedonia and Turkey (Eurostat, 2020; see Table 8).

Table 8. *Number of divorces per 100 marriages*

Year	No
2014	17.8
2015	15
2016	19.3
2017	19.9
2018	21

Note. INSTAT (2020)

### *Lone-parent families*

The percentage of lone-parent families in Albania in 2011 was 1.2 for fathers and 6.5 for mothers. This data is taken from Census 2011, but there are no data found for recent years. The table shows that for lone mothers, the rate is quite higher compared to lone fathers (Table 9).

Table 9. *Percentage of lone-parent families for 2011*

Lone fathers	Lone mothers
1.2	6.5

Note. INSTAT, Census (2011)

### *New family forms such as same-sex couple households*

According to ERA-LGBTI (Equal Rights Association for Western Balkans and Turkey), Albania is a country that does not legally allow same-sex marriage. Although the Albanian Constitution does not prohibit same-sex marriage, the Family Code of the Republic of Albania defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman. The Parliament of Albania has passed a resolution in 2015 which protects the rights of people in the LGBT community, and which was voted in favour. However, the Family Code has not changed to allow for same-sex cohabitation or marriage.

### *Family structures and changes across social groups*

The only data available for family structures is taken from the Albania Census 2011 (INSTAT, 2011). The most dominant family structure is household of married couples living with children but without other family members (see Table 10). More information in 2.1 section.

Table 10. *Family structures*

Household structure	Rates
1. HH without children	21.3
2. Married couples or single parents with children living with other family members	14.8
3. Married couples with children living without other family members	56.2

Note. INSTAT, Census 2011

### *Children and youth living in institutions*

According to the authorities, there were 703 children in institutional care in Albania in 2017 (see report on Human Rights by commissioner Dunja Mijatovic presented at the Council of Europe, 2018). Most children were living in public and non-public residential care institutions, including 62 children with disabilities. There were 41 children living in the centres for victims of trafficking, and 75 children living in the centres for victims of domestic violence.

### *Children in out-of-home care such as foster care*

Albania does not have a foster care system; some pilot studies are carried out to support the implementation of foster cares (see evaluation report of Stevens et al., 2013). According to Stevens and colleagues, Albania has taken steps toward establishing a foster care system, but a lack of capacity persists at some levels of services that are related with municipalities accountability, and the need to increase capacity at local level.

### *Home-based support*

There are two types of home-based services in Albania that are provided by Health Centres: 1) medical and health services provided toward pregnant women and children aged 0-12 months; and 2) medical and health services provided for patients who suffer from health conditions that make them unable to commute to the Health Centres (see HAP, 2020). The services are mostly medical, and the provision of services many times is challenging, and home assessments or interventions are rarely done (HAP, 2020).

## **1.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare**

### *Poverty rates*

The official national data for poverty trends date back to 2012, which poverty rate for Albania was 39.1 %. According to World Bank (2020), poverty rate in Albania has slowly declined down to 37% in 2020. However, the earthquake that hit the country and the coronavirus pandemic may have a negative influence in increasing the poverty rate trend (Word Bank, 2020).

Table 11. *Poverty rates for Albania*

Year	Total
2012	39.1
2020	37

Note. World Bank (2020)

The rate for the population at risk of poverty in Albania declined by 0.3 percent for the year 2018, compared to 2017.

Table 12. *At-risk-of-poverty rate (ARP)*

Year	Total
2017	23.7
2028	23.4

Note. INSTAT (2020)

### *Households with children living in absolute poverty rates*

Age of children	2008	2012
-----------------	------	------

0-5	23	25
6-10	22	23
10-13	19	22
14-17	17	18

Note. ESA/UNICEF (2016)

Poverty rates for children are lower in 2008 when compared to 2012. Poverty rates are higher for households with younger children (ESA/UNICEF, 2016). One of the main concerns regarding the well-being of children at poverty or at risk of poverty is child labour that is abusive and harmful (e.g., begging, car windscreen washing, selling items at the traffic lights, collecting cans for recycling). Street children come from large households suffering extreme poverty, and many times with dysfunctional parents (street children at high risk of facing domestic violence, alcoholic parents) (ESA/UNICEF, 2016). The information is limited for child poverty in Albania (European Commission, 2019).

#### *Employment/unemployment rates*

The unemployment rate for Albania has slightly decreased from 2016 until 2019. For the 15-64 age group, there is a slight increase during 2019 with regard to the rate of unemployment, particularly the 30-64 age group which had a higher unemployment rate increase in 2020. On the other hand, the youngest age group (15-29 years), has the highest trend of unemployment rate, but which has a constant decrease during the period 2016-2020 (see Table 13).

Table 13. *Unemployment Rate*

Age	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
15-64	14.8	14.1	12.8	12	12.1
15-29	27.7	25.9	23.1	21.5	20.7
30-64	11.1	10.8	9.2	8.7	9.2

Note. INSTAT (2020)

The unemployment rate for Albania based on gender reveals that for the period 2016 until 2019, there was a higher rate for male versus female. In 2020, the rate of unemployment has slightly increased for females versus males (see Table 14).

Table 14. *Unemployment rate by sex for 15-64 age group*

Year	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
	%		
2016	15.5	14.1	14.8
2017	15.1	12.8	14.1
2018	13.2	12.3	12.8
2019	12.2	11.8	12
2020	12	12.4	12.1

Note. INSTAT (2020)

The employment rate during the period 2016- 2019 has steadily increased, whereas in 2020 it has slightly decreased for the 15-64 age group, particularly the 30-64 age group which was affected the most. The 15-29 age group does not have a decreasing trend in employment, but during the years the rate of employment has increased consistently for this age group (see Table 15).

Table 15. *Employment rate*

Age	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
-----	------	------	------	------	------

15-64	56.6	57.4	59.5	61.2	60.7
15-29	33	33.8	38.5	41.2	41.6
30-64	68.2	68.7	71	72.5	70.5

Note. INSTAT (2020)

The employment rate is considerably higher for males than for females in the Albanian context. There is an increasing trend for the employment rate for both males and females during the 2016-2019 period, but a decrease in employment rate in 2020 (see Table 16).

Table 16. *Employment rate by sex for 15-64 age group*

Year	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
%			
2016	62.7	50.2	56.6
2017	64.3	50.3	57.8
2018	66.8	52.3	59.5
2019	68.2	54.4	61.2
2020	67.8	53.8	60.8

Note. INSTAT (2020)

*Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage related to gender, age, ethnicity, migrant status, and other social dimensions*

The 15-29 age group is more disadvantaged in the labour market, particularly women. The employment rate for women is nearly 10.7% lower compared to men. The highest unemployment is among Albanian youth with low levels of education living in rural areas. Young

people with only a primary level of education are more eager to migrate than youth with university degrees. Also, unemployment is one of the major factors for youth to migrate. Roma and Egyptian minorities are the most marginalized groups, and the levels of unemployment are the highest in these ethnic groups (INSTAT, 2015).

#### *Patterns of education disadvantage*

In Albania, participation in the upper secondary education is higher for boys than girls (99.3% vs 91.7%), whereas for higher education the rate is reversed (71.8% versus 48.7%) (INSTAT, 2020). In 2018, it was estimated that the early school leaving rate in Albania was higher for men (18.3%) for young men than for young women (16.4%) aged 18-24 (Eurostat, 2020).

#### *Major social welfare trends such as disadvantage risks, welfare benefit receipt levels*

In Albania, the spending for social protection has been significantly lower than the EU average, but during the period 2005-2016 it has more than doubled, by spending 9.4% of its GDP on social protection. Maternity benefits cover 365 calendar days in Albania, and women with a minimum contribution period of 12 months are eligible for maternity benefits, which equal 80% of the contributory salary for the pre-birth period and 150 days post-birth, and afterwards 50% of the contributory salary. In 2015, men became eligible for paternity benefits. The social assistance cash benefit is the only family benefit in Albania, targeting households and special categories of individuals in need. The social assistance is the only poverty targeted programme; it is very low and not tied to a minimum living standard (minimum approximately 37 euro and maximum around 70 euro per month). The only child benefit is a one-off bonus payment at birth. Before 2019, the bonus was approximately 40 Euros (5,000 Lek) for every child born. In January 2019, the government increased the infant bonus for a firstborn child approximately 325 Euro (40,000 Lek); for a second-born child approximately 650 Euros (80,000 Lek); and for a third-born child approximately 975 Euro (120,000 Lek), plus the 40 Euros bonus for every child born. The revised social assistance programme provides some modes benefits, related to child school enrolment, vaccination, in order to ensure inclusivity for certain vulnerable categories. Albania does not have any tax allowance programme for families (Ymeri, 2019).

#### *Housing problems*

Most families face problems with buying apartments or houses because of the very expensive and non-affordable prices compared with the average salaries. The government of Albania has approved the social housing strategy for 2016-2025 and the Law on Social Housing (Law 22/2018), which aims to find more affordable solutions for housing for vulnerable and low-income families (Jorgoni, 2019). There are 15 priority groups who benefit from social housing:

single-parent households, large families, older adults, people with disabilities, young couples, households who have changed residence, orphans, returning emigrants, migrant workers, asylum-seekers, families of fallen officers, victims of domestic violence, the Roma community, the Egyptian community, and recipients of economic assistance (Jorgoni, 2019). In 2018, only 12.8% of applicants benefited from the social housing programmes; mostly people with disabilities, recipients of economic assistance, and Roma households (Jorgoni, 2019).

*Summary: The broader socio-economic context and trends which influence children's, parental and family circumstances and environments*

Overall, Albanian statistics indicate that there is a lower fertility rate, a declining trend for the percentage of the young population, and increasing trend for ageing of the population during the last decade. The poverty rate has been declining since 2012 but the pandemic and the earthquake have posed a threat to poverty for many Albanians. The unemployment rate is higher for the younger population compared to older adults, whereas the employment rate is higher for males than females. In Albania, social assistance is the only poverty targeted programme, and is very limited compared to the minimum living standards. Furthermore, housing is quite a critical issue for many young couples and families in general because rents and prices are quite non-affordable compared with the average salaries, and particularly hard for at-risk target groups. However, maternity benefits are highly supportive of mothers, and in 2015 fathers became eligible for paternity benefits. There are limited home-based services to support families.

Emigration rates showed fluctuations during the last decade, but in 2019 there is a higher rate of asylum applications, which may be an indicator of economic insecurity for the population. Also, spending for social protection has been significantly lower than the EU average, but the budget has more than doubled during recent years. In rural areas, the size of the household is higher compared to urban areas, but this has also steadily declined. Albania has the highest crude marriage rate, but the trend for marriage and divorce has been non-linear, slightly increasing and decreasing throughout recent years, however the divorce rate in Albania is lower compared to other countries.

The most vulnerable groups are Roma, Egyptians, LGBT, people with disabilities, children, and the groups most at risk of social exclusion are women, men, youth, and elders belonging to these categories, and victims of trafficking and unaccompanied minors. In Albania, orphans are institutionalized, and a foster care system has not been established yet, but there have been some progress to implement this system. Most early school leavers are from vulnerable groups; the number of males is higher than females. There is a higher probability for people with less education to emigrate compared to people with a higher level of education.

In conclusion, Albanian statistics indicate that there are quite a number of challenges related to poverty, housing, employment, vulnerable groups, emigration, and family support programmes which need to be addressed for further progress.

#### **1.4 The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions and actors' which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision:**

(i) *Membership to the EU; YES NO, No*

(ii) *Relationship with European Union*

Albania is a candidate country, and ongoing progress is needed in Democratic and Social Policy development and implementation. Despite some advancements, more progress is needed to move forward from a candidate country to a member of the EU country.

(iii) *Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy*

The Ministry of Health and Social Protection is responsible for social policy in Albania. Further municipalities and international agencies for child protection are responsible for monitoring and implementing services in accordance with action plans and strategies for child and family protection.

(iv) *Influential lobbying groups*

In Albania, there are some international and national NGOs that support children, families, and youth. Some of the most influential NGOs are UNICEF, Save the Children, Terres Des Hommes, World Vision etc.

(v) *Influential policy/research networks*

As mentioned above, international NGOs in collaboration with national NGOs, the government and local entities involved in social policy, have carried out most of the progress in social policy system. Also, universities have collaborated with NGOs to further build evidence in the area of family support.

(vi) *The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support*

Albania is a parliamentary constitutional republic, and the President of Albania is the head of state while the Prime Minister is the head of government and the cabinet. The Committee for Protecting Children's Rights of the parliament supports initiatives and actions for children's rights and also serves as advocate for children. A second Committee of the parliament

is the Committee for Work, Social Issues and Health. Also, the parliament has a special Committee for Gender Equality and Violence Prevention in Women.

*(vii) The democratic system and main political parties; unitary vs federal state structures; centralised vs decentralised structures)*

Albania has a unitary democratic and multi-party system. The two major political parties in Albania are the Socialist Party and the Democratic Party. There are several minor parties that have their representatives in the Parliament, such as the Socialist Movement for Integration, Party for Justice, Integration and Unity and Social Democratic Party of Albania. Overall, the two main parties aim at increasing minimum salaries for workers in the private and public sectors, and increasing salaries for workers in the public sector. The Democratic Party aims at doubling the social assistance aid for families in needs, increasing the bonus for every childbirth, and providing monthly cash assistance for the children for the first five years of their lives. Also, the Democratic Party aims at covering the majority of students' tuitions at public universities, and to support young couple housing by offering mortgage loans in the form of a zero-interest rate. On the other hand, the Socialist Party aims at offering universal services for all children, putting emphasis on prevention, intervention and reintegration services for children and their families in the communities, supporting socio-economical schemes for children and families in need, supporting young couples, and developing social policies in support of reproductive health.

*(viii) The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular (e.g., Ministry roles, national vs local/regional government roles)*

The Ministry responsible for family support in Albania is the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (<https://shendetesia.gov.al>).

Local/regional governments, mostly municipalities have a directory for social care, which is also responsible for family support services. Lately, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection has developed an institutional entity, the State Agency on Child Rights and Protection, which aims at increasing Child Protection services throughout the country.

*(ix) The ways in and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policymaking and reviews; (not more than 10 lines)*

When developing National Strategic Policy documents for families and children, there are consultations with different groups of interest, mostly international and national stakeholders, civil society, and NGOs. There are attempts to include parents/families, children, and young

people when developing these policy documents. For example, the National Agenda for Children's Rights 2017-2020, was supported by national institutions for children and families, UNICEF, a group of experts, local government, and also seminars and focus groups with children were carried out.

**1.5 List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year 2000. For each policy document indicate:**

*(a) Whether participation of families and young people have been mentioned in the document*

A list of strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year of 2000 in Albania is as follows:

*The Strategic Document on Reproductive Health (2009-2015)*

The strategic document aims to meet the needs of the population for better reproductive health especially for women and children. The documents aim at promoting perinatal health, reducing child mortality, promoting family planning methods, reducing sexually transmitted infections in youths, promoting the rights of adolescents for reproductive health education and services, promoting gender equality, and preventing domestic violence for better health of women and children (Ministry of Health<sup>1</sup>, 2009).

*The Strategic Document and Action Plan on Sexual and Reproductive Health (2017-2021)*

The strategic document is part of ongoing efforts for promoting reproductive health. The aim of the document is to improve the reproductive health of Albanians, particularly women, children, and youths. In addition, another important aim is to offer equal opportunities to exercise sexual and reproductive rights. The main priorities of this document are secure motherhood, family planning, the health of the infant and child, the health of adolescents, family violence, tumours of reproductive systems, prevention and management of sexually transmitted diseases, and infertility (Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2017). The document has analysed several statistics related to the global and Albanian context, whereas the participation of women, children, adolescents or families at the preparatory phase was not mentioned.

*Family Planning Action Plan (2009-2015)*

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Health now is part of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection

The document aims at increasing the prevalence of modern contraceptive methods, increase services for family planning in Primary Health Care, and increase the efficacy of the personnel of Primary Health Care by professional trainings.

*Mother Health Action Plan (2009-2015)*

The document aims at lowering infant and mother mortality rates, increasing mother's health by preventing anemia during pregnancy, by taking the prenatal care, and lowering the rates of abortion.

*Children and Adolescents Health Action Plan (2009-2015)*

The document aims at reducing infant mortality rates, children mortality rates, providing vaccination as planned by protocols, protecting and treating children with HIV, preventing traumas in family or communities, preventing domestic violence, preventing children's abuse and neglect, promoting psycho-social development and wellbeing of children and adolescents, reducing rates for drug addiction, smoking, alcohol in adolescents, and providing services for adolescents that increase their access to information for reproductive health.

*The National Cyber Security Strategy 2020-2025*

The strategic document is designed to support cyber security institutional mechanism in order to protect citizens from cybercrimes and threats and increase the level of cyber security in the country. One of the chapters of this strategy takes in consideration creating cyber secure institutional mechanism for children. Parents and children participation were included when designing this section of the document. In 2018-2019, UNICEF Albania, a strategic partner in collaboration with the government, carried out a study with a sample of 1000 children of 9-18 age and their parents, which aimed at taking descriptive data for internet use and also identifying negative experiences of children during internet navigation, such as online bullying, online violence and abuse. Also, there have been several awareness campaigns involving approximately 12.000 children of secondary schools, and most of the time children state that parents are not aware of the threats they face when using the internet (The National Authority for Electronic Certification and Cyber Security, 2019).

*The National Strategy for Children 2001-2005*

The main objectives of this document concern the promotion of the health and development of children in general and of children that come from vulnerable groups; protecting children; promoting education and learning; and promoting children's participation in decision-making. There is no information regarding the participation of children and families during the process of preparing the document. The document has been prepared by analysing international

documents of interest, taking into consideration international studies, as well as the context of the Albanian care system. There is no information indicating that women, children, and adolescents have participated as active members during the preparatory phase of the document.

*The National Strategy for Children 2005-2010*

The document is part of the ongoing work for promoting children's health, development, social protection, promoting education and participation in decision-making. No participation of families or children were emphasized during the process of designing the document.

*The National Action Plan for Children 2012-2015*

The main objective of the plan is protecting and respecting children's rights, protecting children from violence, abuse, including children in social services, health services, educational services are the priorities of this document. The group who contributed to this plan is a group of experts from the State Agency for Children's rights protection, ministries, local and regional institutions, NGOs and civil society. However, the two main leading objectives for this plan have been to strengthen the institutional structures that monitor and report on the implementation of children's rights in national and regional level, and the promotion of inclusive policies which take in consideration the protection and inclusion of children.

*The National Action Plan for Youth 2015-2020*

The working group for the National Action Plan for Youth 2015-2020 was composed by national experts, and experts from the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, in collaboration with other ministries. Some of the main objectives of this plan are promoting youth in decision-making, and promoting employment, health, education, social protection. The preparation of the document went through several phases, one of which was holding several meetings on a national level with university students and youth representatives from youth organizations and civil society.

*The National Social Protection Strategy 2015-2020*

This National Strategy is designed by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth and the technical support of UNICEF, and the support of centralized, local, regional institutions, and NGOs that support social protection issues, but it does not mention the participation of families and children of the target group. The main objectives of this National Strategy document are to reduce poverty, to offer every child and adult with disabilities access and benefit from social services, and to offer every child and Albanian family equal access and benefit from a functional and inclusive social care services, based on principles of decentralization, de-institutionalization, and diversification of social services (Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, 2015).

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### *Social Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2025*

Drafted by Ministry of Urban Development, in cooperation with line ministries, representatives of local authorities, international experts of the field, representatives of civil society and experts in housing, and by technical support of Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, United Nations Development Programmes and in partnership with Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth. The document aims to support the needs for housing of the population without excluding any vulnerable category (Ministry of Urban Development, 2016).

### *The National Strategy and Action Plan on Gender Equality 2016-2020*

This National Strategy and its Action Plan were prepared by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth in collaboration with line ministries, with representatives of civil society organisations, national and international organization working on reducing gender-based domestic violence in Albania, but the methodology does not include the participation of families and children of target group.

### *National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians 2015-2020*

The National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians for the period 2015-2020 has launched six priority sectors which are civil registration, education and promoting intercultural dialogue, employment and vocational education and training, healthcare, housing and urban integration, and social protection. The methodology of the Action Plan includes key stakeholder meetings; analysis of key documents; sectorial workshops with ministries and representatives of civil society, including members of Roma and Egyptian communities; focus groups with Roma and Egyptians representatives; local governments, international organizations and gender equality specialists; follow-up individual meetings with experts; field visits, and public presentations. The methodology does not include families and children of Roma and Egyptians communities (Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth<sup>2</sup>, 2015).

### *National Justice for Children Strategy 2017-2020*

The aim of the Albanian Justice for Children Strategy 2017-2020 is to promote and protect the needs and rights of children in conflict with the law, victims or witnesses of crime, minors committing crimes/contraventions, children participating in administrative or civil court

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<sup>2</sup> The Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth name has changed to the Ministry of Health and Social Protection

proceedings (Ministry of Justice, 2017). The document does not specify whether parents or children of the target group were involved when drafting the document.

### **1.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services:**

#### *(i) The priorities in child welfare and family policy*

According to the latest report on enlargement countries issued by the European Commission (2020), Albania has a high need for institutional mechanisms for monitoring the situation of the vulnerable groups and excluded groups from society, including those groups affected by emigration. Cash transfers constitute about 95% of the social protection budget. Approximately 34% of municipalities do not provide social care services, whereas 61% of municipalities do not provide services for people with disabilities. Local social care services need investments and human resources. According to the law on social care services (2019), the central government allocates the social fund and budget to the municipalities, and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection has started to implement the social fund by awarding 14 projects to support establishment of social care services at the local level (European Commission, 2020).

For orphan and abandoned children, the state is promoting foster care systems and other forms of alternative care but more needs to be done to prevent the institutionalisation of children and supporting parents suffering from poverty is critical in many cases of children living in institutions (European Commission, 2020).

There has been some progress in implementing some inclusion policy, but more needs to be done in developing mechanisms at a central level for implementing a social inclusion policy. According to the European Commission report on enlargement countries, approximately half of the population is at risk of poverty or social exclusion. The implementation of Social Housing Law has been successful, and some progress was made in social housing, but still there is a need for more progress especially in adopting the full legal framework (European Commission, 2020).

With regard to gender equality, Albania has improved in the areas of political empowerment, economic participation and opportunities, and has also advanced by publishing the Gender Index to measure gender equality in six domains (work, money, knowledge, time, power, health, and two additional domains which are intersecting inequalities and violence) for the first time. The Labour Code has introduced some changes to support gender equality in the labour market, but there is no monitoring of how these changes have been implemented. One of the major concerns remains over the proportion of women in the informal labour market,

particularly textile and shoe industries, without appropriate labour and social protection (European Commission, 2020).

Young children's enrolment in early education has increased and reached 73% in the school year 2017-2018; with children from disadvantaged groups the progress is especially notable (66% of children enrolled in 2018 compared to 26% in 2017). Nonetheless, there is a need to design strategic documents and implement measures that reach young people who do not attend school (European Commission, 2020).

*(ii) The main types of family provision and support and key features (e.g., different types of cash support (universal and targeted), work-family reconciliation measures and children's/family services, childcare etc)*

#### *Social assistance (Ndihma Ekonomike)*

Social assistance is given to families without or limited income, orphans that are not living in institutions, families with triplets or more infants that are part of vulnerable groups, victims of trafficking when they leave social care institutions until their employment, victims of domestic violence during the period when they have a protective order, and children living in residential homes, that are provided residential services (Law Nr. 57 for Social Assistance of the Albanian Republic, 2019).

- Disability benefits

Disability Benefits are granted to people who suffer from a physical and/or mental disability.

- One-off childbirth bonus

The Childbirth Bonus caters for new-borns and awarded to parents when a child is born. The bonus increases for each childbirth; for the second child the bonus is doubled, for the third child it is tripled and so on (Law Nr.288 of the Republic of Albania, 2020). Before this law, the bonus was very low and was the same amount of cash for all number of births.

- Maternal and paternal leave benefit

The Maternal Leave Benefit may be awarded to a pregnant woman; the earliest approximately four weeks before the expected week of childbirth, and for a maximum of a year after the birth of the child. The mother has the right to be paid 80% of her salary during maternal leave at least four weeks before the birth of the child and a maximum of 150 days after the birth of her child; for the other part of the leave, she has the right to be paid 50% of the salary. The leave is applicable for mothers who adopt their child, and in the case of adoption the leave is taken the day the child is adopted. The father has the right to take the paternal leave benefit after the birth

of the child, if the mother does not use her leave benefit (the father can take his leave 12 weeks after the childbirth).

- Students' benefits

There are several benefits for students in certain categories. These categories may include excellent students, students whose families are awarded the social assistance benefit and come from vulnerable groups, students who study in programs that are a high priority for the government, students who are married and have children, students with disability, orphan students, students identified as victims of human trafficking.

*(iii) The types of funding involved such as state, charity vs private sector providers and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners*

The three basic systems for social protection in Albania are: 1) social assistance benefits; 2) disability benefits; and 3) public services for social care. Social assistance and disability benefits are funded from national funds. Most of the social care public services are funded by international partners, donators, and NGOs.

*(iv) Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations*

- The National Social Protection Strategy 2015-2020 and extended until 2023 focuses on three main strategic objectives: 1) reduction of poverty; 2) quality of life of disabled persons; 3) improving social care services. The implementing institutions for this strategic document are the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, State Social Services, State Agency for the Protection of Children's Rights, the Regional Social Service, local government units which includes special structures providing social care services for child protection, as well as needs assessment and referral units. The implementing ministries provide progress reports for the monitoring and evaluation process (Progress Report, 2019).
- The National Youth Action Plan 2015-2020 is aligned with the National Strategy for Development and Integration and aims at improving youths' quality of life. The action plan determines specific objectives and activities for the monitoring and evaluation of youth policies in Albania. The activities are supported by the state budget and the uncovered budget may be provided by collaboration with donors and/or stakeholders. This action plan is a framework that will be used for monitoring and evaluation. The monitoring will happen by cooperating with stakeholders, and involve a continuous process of data collection, analysis, reporting, conclusions and recommendations. The Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth is the main ministry for monitoring by establishing a

coordination group composed of specialists from relevant fields and will meet periodically; the monitoring will be carried out with supporting partners, in line ministries and other state and foreign agencies as part of the plan (Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, 2015). The evaluation will be carried out each year and will be based by the monitoring reports and also an external evaluation will be provided in 2017 and 2020 (Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, 2015).

- The Strategic Document and Action Plan on Sexual and Reproductive Health (2017-2021) aims at improving the wellbeing and good health of the population. The activities planned in this document will be monitored and evaluated periodically and the process is similar (see above). The main agency responsible for the process is the National Committee of Reproductive Health, which in cooperation with other national and international agencies will monitor and evaluate the activities of this document.
- National Justice for Children Strategy 2017-2020 and action plan, extended until 2021, is a document that aims to guarantee children's access to justice, ensure fair trial for children, prevent child delinquency, resocialization, and reintegration of children in conflict with law and to strengthen collaboration between the authorities of the justice for children system. The leading ministry is the Ministry of Justice. For the implementation of the policies, every six months reports are developed, and recommendations are provided. There is an annual periodic report for the monitoring of the strategy which is published by the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Justice cooperates with line ministries, one representative from the Council of Ministries, one representative from the State Agency for the Rights and Protection of the child, General department of prisons representative, General department of Probation Service representative, Commissioner for the Right to Information and Protection of Personal Data representative, Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination representative, High Judicial Council, and other in-line agencies' representatives. The Ministry of Justice invites representative from international programmes and donor organisations that support the justice system bodies and child rights civil society representatives to join the meetings of the monitoring group.
- National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians 2015-2020, aims at the social inclusion of Roma and Egyptians in the mainstream society. The document was drafted by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth in cooperation with line ministries, consultation with local authorities, international organizations, representatives of Roma and Egyptian organizations, experts in the area of Roma and Egyptians, and by the expertise and technical assistance of Supporting Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptian

Communities Project, funded by the European Union and implemented by United Nations Development Programme in partnership with the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth. The Integrated Policy Management Group will monitor the action plan, in coordination with the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, line ministries, and the support of civil society and local level structures. The responsible Ministries will work with regional representatives and municipalities to improve the quality of data. The process of self-declaration is not standardized, and some local level agencies hesitate to collect the data for fear of violating privacy rights, particularly for Egyptians communities. A sectorial working group on social inclusion will facilitate the coordination of the main responsible ministry with international organizations who promote the integration of Roma and Egyptians, by holding meetings every six months, as well as field visits to local governments units. Civil society organizations are key partners that ensure that public services reach the most vulnerable communities. The international community contributes to the action plan implementation by promoting good practice from Albania and the region and supporting financially activities of the plan. Some municipalities have drafted their own action plans where they set out priorities identified in cooperation with the local Roma and Egyptian populations.

- National Strategy and Action Plan on Gender Equality 2016-2020, the document aims at promoting gender equality and reducing gender-based violence and domestic violence. The strategic document is compliant with all sector-based strategies of the National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015-2020, and so the process of monitoring the activities is cross-sector and very similar to other action plans' monitoring and evaluation procedures.
- Social Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2025, the main aim of the strategy is to offer economical and affordable solutions for housing and quality of housing for families with low income or middle income. The approaches in monitoring and evaluation are similar to the mentioned strategies and action plans. The monitoring will be provided by the National Housing Committee that will be ordered by the Council of Ministries. The committee will work closely with interested groups, in line ministries, agencies involved with social housing, data collection will take place in every local unit, and annual monitoring reports will be prepared.
- Challenges: Some of the main challenges and limitations are related to the cooperation with the regional and local level structures, data collection, data analysis, lack of human resources particularly in the regional and local level, and funding gaps.

## 1.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision

Albania has made progress in developing policy supporting children's rights and interest. The Albanian Parliament approved the Child Rights and Protection Law in 2017; a critical law for protecting children from exploitation, violence, and abuse. In addition, another critical change in law for survivors of family violence was approved in 2018, by strengthening protection measures particularly for children and women suffering from domestic violence and abuse. Other **prominent policy** developments that support family include: The National Social Protection Strategy 2015-2020, extended until 2023; The Social Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2025; The National Strategy and Action Plan on Gender Equality 2016-202; The National Action Plan for Youth 2015-2020; The National Justice for Children Strategy 2017-2020; The National Cyber Security Strategy 2020-2025; The National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians 2015-2020; and The Strategic Document and Action Plan on Sexual and Reproductive Health 2017-2021.

In terms of **practice development**, progress has been slow. Social assistance cash benefit is the only family benefit in Albania, and it targets special categories of households and individuals in need. The only child benefit is the one-off childbirth benefit payment. On the other hand, social care services are based on funding from the non-public sector (mostly donors and international organizations) and lack a supporting institutional and financial scheme from the state. There has been effort from the government in 2018-2019, to develop a new framework for resourcing and allocating the Social Fund to local government units, but still the funding is modest, and very low (Ymeri, 2019). The State Agency on Child Rights and Protection supports families and children, and it has established several units throughout the country which addresses any cases where children's rights may be threatened. Lately, a social service map was published with the support of UNICEF, which offer updated information for social services, locations, types of services, and level of capacities. The system faces challenges related to qualified workforce and the uneven distribution of the required resources and capacities.

The state provides for working parents early day-care and kindergarten services against very modest payment, which most of the time are affordable for parents. In the recent years, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth started an initiative for distributing free books for children in elementary schools, and then extended this initiative for children in secondary schools, by economically supporting families and children's education. For children and adolescents who come from disadvantaged socio-economic families, Roma and Egyptians families will have the right to take free books throughout the school years. In 2017, another pilot project initiative was launched by the Ministry Of Education, Sport and Youth which was called 'Let's do Homework'. This initiative offered the possibility for pupils to stay at school for an extra two hours to do their homework and other extracurricular activities, by providing equal environments for pupils from different socio-economic families, and also by supporting parents and families with additional

childcare. It was undertaken in 20 elementary and secondary schools, in five cities of Albania, targeting particularly vulnerable and at-risk families.

*(i) What are the pressing policy, practice and research challenges impeding developments?*

#### *Policy challenges*

Policy developments are needed for parenting, family support strategic documents and action plans; policy documents addressing early education at a critical age of 0-3, and 3-6; targeting the population of parents, children, and families in general; and vulnerable families. One of the main challenges in Albania is poverty and social exclusion, for children and families. Providing policy frameworks that support state social care systems and transparent mechanisms of service delivery is challenging, but highly needed.

#### *Practice challenges*

1. One of the main practice challenges is limited human resources, staff training, and a need for standardized protocols for professionals working with children and families throughout the country.
2. The implementation of social services is challenging, and more coordination is needed between the central government and regional, local authorities to improve service delivery throughout the country.
3. One of the challenges in service delivery in early day cares and kindergarten is the high number of children compared to childcare providers, which may be a serious threat to the quality of early care, whereas other initiatives are undertaken as pilot projects which may not be sustainable as service delivery to support families.
4. Vulnerable families may be more at risk for not accessing public services compared to non-vulnerable families.
5. Social assistance budget and other state benefits are too low compared to the standard of living in the country level.
6. The government structures often fail to address the needs of marginalised groups (European Report, 2020);
7. There is a lack of monitoring the situation for vulnerable groups, including families that have been affected by emigration (European Commission, 2020).

#### *Research challenges*

Most of the research in the field of parenting, families, and children's wellbeing comes from the collaboration of the government with international organizations such as UNICEF, Save the Children, Word Vision, Terres Des Homes, and so on. The government needs to increase its budget in research, in line with research area that are prioritized in Europe (European Commission, 2020). There is a need to strengthen research conducting at university level. Research on parenting, parenting intervention, and evidence-based parenting programs are almost non-existent in Albania. Most research carried out is focused on vulnerable categories of children; for example, "National Study on children in street situation in Albania", "New research in children's internet use", "Research report on the application of restorative justice in cases involving child victims in Albania", and "Prevalence Data on Different Forms of Violence against Women in Albania". Most of the research carried out in Albania is focused on descriptive data or qualitative data reporting, particularly for children and families that are at high risk of violence, abuse, exclusion, and poverty.

*(ii) What are the pressing gaps in provision?*

#### *Policy gaps*

There are two main gaps with regard to policy provision:

- 1) There has been important progress in social policy development, which mostly focuses on the decentralization of the social protection system and establishing community-based services; still there is a huge need to further develop social policy financing frameworks for regional and local governments, and the establishment of legacy in this area (ICS & ISA, 2016; Jorgoni & Ymeri, 2017).
- 2) It is highly necessary to develop policy documents specific to family support, family issues, parenting, early infant and child development, preventive policies, and evidence-based social policies that reach families throughout the country.

#### *Poverty reduction and social care gap*

In Albania, the unemployment rate is double compared to the EU countries, and youth has the lowest participation rates in the labour force. There are several limitations to social care provision for the poorest and for the general population (INSTAT, 2020), and only 0.03% of country GDP goes to employment programmes (Jorgoni & Ymeri, 2017). Existing social provision is not sustainable, and the country needs a centralized strategy that is clearly implemented into local level practising, with planned and allocated costs that are consistently monitored and evaluated (ICS & ISA, 2016). There is a gap in provision of services with well-trained staff, in particular social workers for case management, needs assessments, and referral

in the system (ICS & ISA, 2016). Providing social services and access for the most vulnerable groups and hard to reach groups may be very challenging due to lack of budget funds. Most of the public services financed by state budget include residential and day care centres, but there are serious financial gaps in social service provision, and most services are based on donors and charities which have their own agendas on funding and only provide temporary support (Jorgoni & Ymeri, 2017).

### *Gender gap*

The Gender Equality Index for Albania in 2017 reached 60.4 (7 points lower than the EU-28) (INSTAT, 2020), and the domain of time had the lowest index scores (48.1), indicating that women are the ones who face the daily challenges of unpaid household work, the responsibilities of care for their families, and accompanied with labour market disparities (lower employment rates) (INSTAT, 2020). There is a lack of strategic documents and actions regarding equal division of time between women and men (INSTAT, 2020).

### *An urgent need to support families during COVID-19 pandemic*

The Albanian Government has adopted several measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the emergency reactions to protect the most vulnerable groups include relief package with food and hygiene items for three months, cash assistance has doubled for families who are part of the scheme, whereas people with disabilities and invalids can have their cash benefits monthly without going through evaluations. Moreover, the Albanian Government has developed several normative acts to support small business activities, employers in small business activities, and financial support for affected businesses. However, several emergent issues have been identified concerning children and families' wellbeing. A recent report assessing the impact of Covid-19 on the wellbeing of children and families states that there are negative emotional effects on children, increased cases of verbal and physical violence in families, and increased unemployment and economic insecurity in families (World Vision, 2020). There is an immediate need for family support service provision during the COVID-19 pandemic; services that include both financial and socio-emotional support for children and families.

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## 2 AUSTRIA- National report on family support policy & provision

**Christian Haider & Julia Holzer**

### 2.1. Trends and issues related to demography

#### *Fertility rates*

In the years 2010 and 2015-2018, the fertility rates in Austria can be illustrated as follows: 1.44 (children per woman) in 2010; 1.49 children in 2015; 1.53 children in 2016; 1.52 in 2017; and 1.47 children per woman in 2018. There is no data available for 2019 (refer to Table 1 below).

#### *Fertility rates*

Year	Total fertility rate
2010	1.44
2015	1.49
2016	1.53
2017	1.52
2018	1.47
2019	-

#### *Families with children by number of children*

Austrian data covers either children under 15 or under 18. The figures below represent families with children under the age of 18. In 2010, 349,900 (22.9%) families had one child, 703,800 (46%) families had two children, 326,300 (21.3%) families had three children, and 149,200 families (9.8%) had three or more children. In 2011, 740,252 families had one child, 509,269

families had two children, 138.878 families had three children, and 38.564 had three or more children.

In 2012, 371,700 families had one child (22.1%), 802,600 (47.8%) families had two children, 368,700 (22%) families had three children, and 135,900 (8.1%) families had three or more children.

In 2013, 331,500 families had one child (22.3%), 713,000 (47.9%) families had two children, 327,000 families (21.9%) had three children, and 118,300 families (7.9%) had three or more children.

In 2014, 340,100 (23%) families had one child, 680,300 (45.9%) families had two children, 335,800 (22.6%) families had three children, and 141,800 families (8.5%) had three or more children.

In 2015, 335,700 (22.6%) families had one child, 677,400 (45.6%) families had two children, 336,700 (22.6%) families had three children, and 141,800 families (8.5%) had three or more children.

In 2018, 325,700 (21.5%) families had one child, 711,000 (47%) families had two children, 335,400 (22.2%) families had three children, and 125,500 families (9.4%) had three or more children (Eurostat, 2020).

*By number of children*

Year	One child	Two children	Three (+) children
		%	
2010	22.9	46	31.1
2011			
2012	22.1	47.8	30.1
2013	22.3	47.9	29.8
2014	23	45.9	31.1

2015	22.6	45.6	31.1
2018	21.5	47	31.6

*(i) Percentage of the population from 0 to 18*

In the year 2010, 20.9% of the Austrian population was under 19 years old; in 2015 and 2016 it was 19.6% as compared to 19.5% in 2018 and 19.4% in 2019. Short comment about trends: there has been an insignificant decline since 2018. Eurostat table states population from 0-19, not 0-18 as required (Eurostat, 2020).

*Percentage of population under the age of 19 years*

Year	%
2010	20.9
2015	19.6
2016	19.6
2017	-
2018	19.5
2019	19.4

*(ii) Percentage of population over working (retiring) age*

In 2010, 17.6 % of the Austrian population was over working age, in 2015 it was 18.5 % as compared to 18.4% in 2017, and 18.7 % in 2018 and 2019 respectively (Eurostat, 2020).

*Percentage of population over working (retiring) age*

Year	%
2010	17.6
2015	18.5
2016	-
2017	18.4
2018	18.7
2019	18.7

*(iii) Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities*

Statistics Austria (the Austrian Federal Statistics Institute) and research networks or social policy documents, such as the National Education Report (published once in three years) or the annual 'Families in Numbers Report' by the Austrian Institute for Family Studies, differentiate only vaguely between different ethnic, social or/ and cultural identities. The main distinction is made between people with or without a migration background. As far as foreign citizens are concerned, the available categories mostly relate to the countries of origin according to whether they are EU Member States or Non-EU Member States. Among those whose country of origin is not a EU Member State, differentiation is usually made between former Yugoslavia, Turkey, and as a third category 'other'. However, the Austrian Integration Fund reports from first generation migrants in a much more detailed way but puts its focus on labour market participation (Kaindl & Schipfer, 2019; Statistik Austria, 2020a).

*(iv) Migration patterns*

In Austria's post-WW2 migration history, particular emphasis can be given to former Yugoslavia and Turkey. In the 1960s, Austria began recruiting work labour ("Gastarbeiter"; guest-workers) especially from these two countries, many of whom settled permanently in Austria. Additionally, in the context of the 1990s war in former Yugoslavia, migration from former Yugoslavia to Austria increased. As stated above, these circumstances are also reflected in the description of migrant groups in national statistics. However, especially in the light of migration processes to Austria in the context of the EU enlargement in 2004 and 2007 (due to restrictions on the free movement

of people that were applied for seven years, only between 2011 and 2014 there was a considerable 'new' migration on a large scale level from (South-) Eastern Europe to Austria) and in the context of flight movements from outside of Europe (e.g. Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq) in 2015, this distinction is not representative of the diversity in the Austrian population, especially taking in consideration children and young people.

The data represented above is drawn from the annually published "Migration and Integration" Report by the Austrian Integration Fund, which again draws on data by the Austrian Federal Statistics Institute (Statistik Austria, 2019a). In 2010, about 112.691 people immigrated to Austria, while 91.375 left the country. This resulted in a net immigration of 21.316 persons. With 40.98% of immigrants settling in the capital city, Vienna recorded the highest relative population increase of all federal states.

In 2015, about 214.400 people immigrated to Austria, while at the same time almost 101.300 left the country. This resulted in a net immigration of about 113.100 persons. This was primarily due to the increased immigration of asylum seekers and the of immigrant workers, family members and students from the EU.

Nearly 40% of the growth in 2015 was accounted for by the federal capital Vienna. As in previous years, Vienna also recorded the highest relative population increase of all federal states (the number of inhabitants rose by 2.4%, which is almost twice as much as in Austria as a whole).

In 2016, about 174.300 persons immigrated to Austria, while at the same time 109.700 persons left the country. The resulting net immigration of about 64.600 persons was about 43% below the previous year. This was primarily due to the sharp decline in the immigration of asylum seekers from compared to the previous year, but also to a decline in the immigration of EU nationals.

In 2017, about 154.700 persons immigrated to Austria, while at the same time, 110.100 persons left the country. The resulting net immigration of about 44.600 persons was 31% below the previous year (2016: 64.700 persons). The main reason for this was the further sharp year-on-year decline in the immigration of asylum seekers from third countries, while the immigration of EU nationals increased once again.

In 2018, about 146.900 persons immigrated to Austria, while at the same time 111.600 people left the country. The resulting net immigration of about 35.300 persons was 21% below the previous year. The main reason for this was the further sharp year-on-year decline in the immigration of asylum seekers from third countries, while the immigration of EU nationals remained largely unchanged Eurostat, 2020).

*Total net immigration to Austria per year*

Year	Total No.
2010	21.316
2015	113.100
2016	64.600
2017	44.600
2018	35.300

*Note.* No data available for 2019

**2.2 Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles and children’s living arrangements.**

*(i) Family household types*

In documents as the annually published “Families in Numbers Report” by the Austrian Institute for Family Research (Kaindl & Schipfer, 2019), household types are differentiated by married couples (with and without children and by the number of children), lone-parent families (number and age of children and gender), blended families, and non-marital partnerships (with and without children and by the number/age of children).

*(ii) Marriage and divorce rates*

*Total first Marriage rates*

In 2010 the crude marriage rate was 4.5, in 2015, 2016 and 2017 - 5.1, and in 2018 5.3. The crude divorce rate was 2.1 in 2010, at 1.9 in 2015 and 1.8 in the years 2016, 2017 and 2018. No data is available for 2019.

46.5% of 100 marriages were divorced in 2010, whereas in 2015 it was 36.7, in 2016 35.5 and 36 per 100 marriages. No data is available for 2018 and 2019.

The mean age at first marriage in 2010 was 31.9 years for men and 29.3 years for women. In 2015, it was 31.2 years for women and 33.9 years for men, while in 2016 it was 34.0 years for men and 31.3 years for women. In 2017, the mean age at first marriage was 34.2 years for men and 31.5 for women. No data is available for 2018 and 2019 (Eurostat, 2020).

*Crude marriage rate per year*

Year	Crude marriage rate
2010	4.5
2015	5.1
2016	5.1
2017	5.1
2018	5.3

*Mean age at first marriage*

Year	Women.	Men
2010	29.3	31.9
2015	31.2	33.9
2016	31.3	34.0
2017	31.5	34.2
2018	-	-

*(iii) Lone-parent families*

According to the annual 'Families in Numbers Report' by the Austrian Institute for Family Studies, in 2010, there were 209.300 lone-parent families with children under the age of 18. As expected, 90% of them were single mothers. Altogether, children growing up in lone-parent families made up 13.5% of all families with children under age 18. In 2011, there were 137.000 families with children under 18. The vast majority (91.2%) were single mothers; in 2012 there were 192.900 single parents (12.9% of all families), women making 91% (Kaindl & Schipfer, 2012).

In 2013 there were 142.300 lone-parent families; 90% were single mothers. In 2014, there were 138.500 lone-parent families (15.5% of all families). The vast majority (90.6%) were single mothers (Kaindl & Schipfer, 2014).

In 2015, there were 199.300 lone-parent families (12.5% of all families with children under age 18). As in the previous years, the vast majority (92.7 %) of them were single mothers. In 2018, there were 134.900 lone-parent families in Austria (15% of all families with children under age 18); 91.2% were women (Kaindl & Schipfer, 2019).

*(iv) New family forms such as same-sex couple households*

*Same-sex couple households:*

Since January 1, 2010, same-sex couples can enter a registered partnership in Austria; since January 1, 2019, same-sex couples can marry in Austria. Data regarding registered partnerships was found only for the years listed below.

According to the Federal Statistics Institute (Statistik Austria, 2020b), in 2013 a total of 368 person (203 men and 165 women) entered a registered same-sex partnership in Austria, in 2015, it was 423 persons (220 men and 203 women) compared to 464 persons (247 men and 217 women) in 2018. In 2019, 890 same-sex couples got married (465 men, 635 women). 188 of these marriages were formerly in a registered partnership.

*Blended Families:*

The described data (drawn from the Federal Statistics Institute) reflects families, in which at least one child (under age 18 or 15) was brought into the household from a previous relationship. From 2010-2018, blended families made up from 8.4% to 9.8% of all families (Kaindl & Schipfer, 2019).

In 2010, there were 77.814 blended families with children under the age of 18 in Austria, which makes 9.8% of the total amount of couples living with children under 18. In 2011, there were 60.400 blended families with children under 15. This makes

9,2% of all families with children under 15 (no data found for families with children under 18). In 2012, there were 66.200 blended families with children under 18 in Austria, (8.6%of all families); in 2013, there were 63.479 (8.4%) compared to 65.503 blended families in 2014 (8.7%). In 2015, there were 64.669 blended families (8.6 %), and in 2018, 66.300 accounting for 8.7% of all couples with children under 18 years in Austria.

*Percentage of blended families in Austria*

Year	%
2010	9.8
2011	9.2
2012	8.6
2013	8.4
2015	8.6
2018	8.7

*(v) Family structures and changes across social groups*

No data found

*(vi) Children and youth living in institutions*

Data regarding Children and youth living in institutions and in out-of-home care is available for the years 2015 – 2018, and is provided by the annual Child and Youth welfare statistics (Statistik Austria, 2016; Statistik Austria, 2017; Statistik Austria 2019b). In the Austrian Child and Youth Welfare System, there is differentiation between educational support (home-based support) and “full childcare provision“, which includes both children living in socio-educational institutions (partial stationary or stationary care facilities or forms of housing) and the upbringing of a child by close relatives, by carers or foster families (usually on a long-term basis). Full childcare provision is implemented in the case of a child’s welfare being endangered and it is no longer possible to remain in the family environment.

In 2015, 13.126 children and youths were being cared for within the framework of full childcare provision (54% boys and 46% girls). 61% lived in socio-pedagogical institutions.

In 2016, a total of 13.646 children were cared for within the framework of full childcare provision; 62 % in institutions. In 2017, a total of 13,617 children and adolescents were cared for within the framework of full childcare provision; similarly to the previous year, 61% of them were cared for in institutions.

In 2018, a total of 13,325 children and youths were cared for within the framework of full childcare provision, 60% of them were cared for in institution, 40% in foster families. No data is available for 2019.

*Total number of children and youth living in institutions*

Year	Total No.
2015	13.126
2016	13.646
2017	13.617
2018	13.325

*(vii) Children in out-of-home care such as foster care*

According to the annual Child and Youth welfare statistics (Statistik Austria, 2016; Statistik Austria, 2017; Statistik Austria 2019b), in 2015 a total of 5119 children and adolescents (39% of all children cared for within the framework of full childcare) were in foster families.

In 2016, a total of 5185 children and adolescents (38% of all children cared for within the framework of full childcare provision) were in foster families.

In 2017, a total of 5,310 children and adolescents (39% of all children cared for within the framework of full childcare provision) were in foster families; in 2018 there were 5330 children (40% of all children and adolescents cared for within the framework of full childcare provision). No data is available for 2019.

*Total number of children and youth in foster families*

Year	Total No.
2015	5119
2016	5185
2017	5310
2018	5330

*(viii) Home-based support*

Home-based support (“Educational support”) is granted to children and adolescents if there is a risk to their welfare. The support is provided in particular through ambulant help, home visits, and visits to doctors as well as through restrictions on contact with those persons who might endanger the child’s welfare. According to the annual Child and Youth welfare statistics (Statistik Austria, 2016; Statistik Austria, 2017; Statistik Austria 2019b), in 2015 a total of 36,369 children and young people received educational support (55% boys and 45% girls).

In 2016, a total of 34,053 children and young people received educational support (again 55% male and 45% female.) For every 1000 minors, a total of 22 children and adolescents (2015: 24) were cared for in 2016 as part of the educational support. In 2017, a total of 35,463 children and young people received educational support (1.6% more than in 2016).

More boys (55%) than girls (45%) were supported. In 2018, a total of 36,255 children and adolescents received educational support, which makes 2.0% more than 2017 in the previous year. Compared to 2015, the increase was 3.6%. More boys (55%) than girls (45%) were supported. For every 1,000 minors, there was a total of 24 children and youths in 2018 (2017: 23) who were cared for within the framework of educational support. No data is available for 2019.

**2.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare.**

*(i) Poverty rates*

The total rate of people at risk of poverty in Austria comprised 14.7% in 2010, 13.9% in 2015, 14.1% in 2016, 14.4% in 2017, and 14.3% in 2018. Among children and young people under 18

years it comprised 22.4% in 2010, 22.3% in 2015, 20.0% in 2016, 23% in 2017, and 21.6% in 2018.

4.3 % of the total population suffered severe material deprivation, compared to 3.6 % in 2015, 3 % in 2016, 3.7% in 2017, and 2.8% in 2018. Among children and young people under 18 years, 5.6 % suffered from severe material deprivation in 2010, 4.2% in 2015, 3.5 % in 2016, and 5.3% in 2017 compared to 3.6% in 2018.

In 2010, 22.4% of people under 18 years were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, in 2015 22.3% compared to 20% in 2016, 23 % in 2017, and 21.6% in 2018. In total, people at risk of poverty or social exclusion made up 18.9 % in 2010, 18.3% in 2015, 18% in 2016, 18.1% in 2017 and 17.5% in 2018. Young people at risk of poverty by the poverty threshold (cut-off point: 60% of median equivalized income after social transfers) made up 19% in 2010, 17.8% in 2015, 16.5% in 2016, 19.1% in 2017, and 19.2% in 2018. No data is available for 2019 (Eurostat, 2020).

*Total rate of people at risk of poverty*

Year	%
2010	14.7
2015	13.9
2016	14.6
2017	14.4
2018	14.3

*Total rate of people under 18 and at risk of poverty*

Year	%
2010	22.4
2015	22.3

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2016	20.0
2017	23.0
2018	21.6

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*(ii) Employment/unemployment rates*

Data reviews of the last decade showed that the highest risk of unemployment is faced by men and women whose educational qualifications do not go beyond compulsory schooling.

The total unemployment rate in Austria was 4.8% in 2010, 5.7% in 2015, 6.0% in 2016, 5.5% in 2017 compared to 4.9% in 2018, and 4.5% in 2019. The total employment (age 15 to 64) was 70.8% in 2010, 71.1% in 2015, 71.5% in 2016, 72.2% in 2017 and 73% in 2018. In Austria, youth (un)employment is not documented for people under 18, but from 15- to 24-year-olds.

The total unemployment rate in Austria among 15- to 24-year-olds was 9.5% in 2010, 10.6% in 2016, 11.2% in 2016, 9.8% in 2017, 9.4% in 2018, and 8.5% in 2019 (Eurostat, 2020).

*Total unemployment rate*

Year	%
2010	4.8
2015	5.7
2016	6.0
2017	5.5
2018	4.9

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*(iii) Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage related to gender, age, ethnicity, migrant status, and other social dimensions*

*Unemployment rate (under 18):*

In Austria, youth (un)employment is not documented for people under 18, but for 15- to 24-year-olds. The total unemployment rate in Austria among 15- to 24-year-olds was 9.5% in 2010, 10.6% in 2015, 11.2% in 2016, 9.8% in 2017, 9.4% in 2018, and 8.5% in 2019.

*Total unemployment rate of people between the age of 15 and 24 years*

Year	%
2010	9.5
2015	10.6
2016	11.2
2017	9.8
2018	9.4
2019	8.5

Unemployment in the light of migration, educational background, and federal state data provided in this section is drawn from the Austrian Integration Fund of the Republic of Austria (a partner of the federal government in the area of integration) which uses data from The Austrian Federal Institute of Statistics for its analyses (Kaindl & Schipfer, 2019).

In 2015, about 80% of all unemployed women and men had a vocational training qualification (“Lehre”) as their highest educational qualification. The unemployment rate also differed between the federal states, while the lowest rate was in Vorarlberg (15.5%) and the highest rate in Vienna (38.9%). The unemployment rate for women and men with university degrees was 3.4%. According to Public Employment Service Austria about 40% (142.719 persons) of all persons registered as unemployed in 2015 were persons with a migration background.

In 2016, the unemployment rate for 15- to 24-year-olds was 8.9%, but for young people from former Yugoslavia and Turkey it was 10.2% and 9.6% respectively. The share of 15- to 24-year-olds who were neither employed nor in education in 2016 was 6% without a migration

background, but 13% among those with a migration background. The employment rate of 15- to 64-year-olds with a migration background was 63%, while that of their peers without a migration background was 74%. This difference is mainly due to the lower labour force participation of migrant women (58% compared to 71% for women without a migration background). The labour force participation of persons from the new EU member states (post 2004) was 70%, people from former Yugoslavia - 64%, while for people coming from Turkey it was 55%.

In 2017, the employment rate of 15- to 64-year-olds with a migration background was 64%, and 75% for those without a migration background. The lowest employment rates were accounted for persons with a Turkish migration background (55%) as well as for persons from the countries of recent flight migration (e.g., Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq), whose employment rate was 27%.

Persons coming from Turkey and citizens of other non-EU countries had particularly high unemployment rates (18.6% and 19.0% respectively). The unemployment rates of persons from Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq in contrast are 48.3%. Generally, persons with low qualifications are unemployed. In 2017, Austrians with a maximum of compulsory schooling had an unemployment rate of 27% and equally qualified foreigners of 31%.

In 2018, the employment rate of 15- to 64-year-olds with a migration background was 66% compared to 75% for people without a migration background. This difference is mainly due to the lower employment rate of migrant women (60% compared to 72% for women without a migrant background). Only the rates of women from EU countries (before 2004) are on a par with those of women without a migration background. The employment rate of women from the countries of recent flight migration (Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq) is at around 20%, followed by Turkish women at 49%. The employment rate of persons without a migration background is higher than that of immigrants in all age groups, except for those over 55 years of age. The youth unemployment rate for people with a migration background is 8.8%, compared to 6.1% for Austrian nationals.

No data is available for 2019

#### *(iv) Patterns of education disadvantage*

The data represented here is drawn from publications by the National Education Report (which is published once every three years), and which draws on data provided by the Austrian Federal Institute of Statistics.

In Austria there is a strong correlation between social background and educational success. Children with a low socio-economic status, with migration background, without sufficient knowledge of German or children whose parents have a low level of education often have less chances to succeed at school. These risk factors are distributed differently in Austria according to federal states and urbanity. In densely populated areas, 40% of primary school children have a migration background, the majority of them being first generation migrants. In Vienna they make up about 45%, which is a higher percentage than the average for other densely populated areas. One risk group is made up of male adolescents with non-German everyday language (this term is not further specified in the reviewed literature). Of these, 12.4% do not attend any further training after completing compulsory schooling (in Austria there are nine years of compulsory education in school; after the completion of compulsory school everybody must either continue school education or do a professional training until the age of 18); the figure for boys with German as their principle everyday language is significantly lower at 5.3%. The range is similarly wide among girls (9.8% compared to 4.0%) (Oberwimmer et al., 2019).

*(v) Major social welfare trends such as disadvantage risks, welfare benefit receipt levels*

There are three main social welfare programs in Austria; unemployment benefit, emergency aid, and a minimum guaranteed income. The data discussed above is drawn from the homepages of the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS, 2020) and the homepage of the Federal Chancellery of the Republic of Austria (Bundeskanzleramt, 2020).

*Unemployment benefit:*

In principle, people who have worked at least 52 weeks in the last two years subject to unemployment insurance are entitled to unemployment benefit. For persons who are not entitled to family allowances, the unemployment benefit including possible supplementary allowance does not exceed 60% of the former daily net income. In case of family allowances unemployment benefit may rise to 80% of the former net income. In theory, unemployment benefit can be received for 20 weeks. However, the duration increases depending on working years and age up to a maximum of 52 weeks. If unemployed people attended a training course within the framework of a work foundation, an extension for a maximum of three or four years applies.

*Emergency aid:*

People who are no longer entitled to unemployment benefits can apply for emergency assistance, which is granted for a maximum of 52 weeks. After that, one must submit a new application. The amount of emergency assistance depends on the basic amount of

unemployment benefit and makes 92%-95% of it. In addition to emergency aid, concerned persons may receive a family allowance if they have to provide for others (e.g., children, sick relatives).

*Minimum income support (“Mindestsicherung”):*

In 2020, the amount of the minimum income support is around EUR 917 for people living alone and single parents, and around EUR 1.375 for couples. The minimum standards for minors in 2019 were between 159 and around 239 euros, depending on the federal state. Some federal states also increase minimum income support by 30 % to compensate for housing costs.

Data is discussed below for the years 2010, 2015, 2016, and 2018. In 2010 a total of around 253,200 people were dependent on social welfare benefits to secure their livelihood. Of these, 177,100 persons in private households were supported by social assistance, while another 76,100 social assistance recipients lived in residential and nursing homes for the elderly.

In 2015, a total of 284,374 persons or 168,447 means-tested households received minimum income support, which was 10.9% (27.969 persons) more than in 2014. The majority of the recipients lived in Vienna (share of persons in 2015: 56%). Women were more dependent on minimum income support than men; their share was 38% in 2015, while men accounted for 35% and children (under 18) 27%. In addition, most recipients were singles (37% of persons: 62% of households); the second largest group was couples with children (30%) and single parents (15%). 63% of all recipients received minimum income support for more than six months.

In 2016, a total of 307.533 persons or 182.173 households received minimum income support, which was 8.1% more than in 2015. The majority of the recipients lived in Vienna (56%). Women were more strongly dependent on minimum income support than men; their share in 2016 was 37%, while men accounted for 36% and children (under 18) for 27%. Moreover, most of the recipients were single (37% of the persons, 62% of the households); the second largest group was couples with children (32%) and single parents (15%). 65% of all recipients received minimum income support for more than six months.

In 2018, a total of 289,646 persons were supported by the minimum guaranteed income; 5.9% less than in 2017. The vast majority (63%) of the recipients lived in Vienna. Overall, in 2018 there were more female (51%) than male (49%) recipients. The share of children (minors and adults) (36%) living in households supported by the minimum guaranteed income was higher than that of women (34%) and men (30%). The majority of the recipients were supported for more than half a year (Eurostat, 2020).

*(vi) Housing problems*

The total overcrowding rate in Austria was 12% in 2010, 15% in 2015, 15.2% in 2016, 15.1% in 2017 and 13.5% in 2018. The overcrowding rate for people under 18 was 19.3% in 2010, 23.8% in 2015, 25.1% in 2016, 24.8% in 2017, and 22.4% in 2018. No data is available for 2019.

The housing cost overburden was 7.5% in 2010, 6.4% in 2015, 7.2% in 2016, 7.1% in 2017 and 6.8% in 2018. For people under 18, the housing cost overburden was 4% in 2010, 5.9% in 2015, 6.4% in 2016, 6.5% in 2017 and 7.3% in 2018. No data is available for 2019 (Eurostat, 2020).

*Total overcrowding rate*

Year	%
2010	12.0
2015	15.0
2016	15.2
2017	15.1
2018	13.5

*Summary: The broader socio-economic context and trends which influences children's, parental and family circumstances and environments*

In spite of social welfare structures and social benefits, which usually guarantee extra allowances for children, data concerning the overcrowding rate, the risk of poverty rate, and especially numbers regarding educational success and thus labour market participation show that economical disadvantages are not fully compensated by these measures.

In Austria, there are considerable discrepancies between densely populated areas (and Vienna in particular) and rural areas. The diversity in the population and especially in schools and thus the number of children that have less chances to succeed at school, is much higher in Vienna than elsewhere in Austria. The same accounts for the number of social benefit recipients

(in 2018 63% of all recipients were in Vienna). On the other hand, the psychosocial infrastructure is much broader in Vienna compared to rural areas.

There are also big differences between children and adults with a migration background and those without. As the data discussed above illustrates, migrants and their descendants are more likely not to continue education after compulsory schooling and are less integrated in the labour market compared to their peers without migration background.

Differentiated data regarding educational success, labour market integration, and health outcomes was not mentioned here in detail, but shows that in Austria, the social background is often determining for these outcomes regardless of ethnic and/or cultural identities.

## **2.4 The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions and actors' which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision**

### *(i) Membership to the EU*

Yes, since January 1, 1995.

### *(ii) Relationship with European Union*

Austria became a member of the EU on January 1, 1995, together with Sweden and Finland. Since its admission to the EU, Austria has actively participated as an equal partner in all major developments of the Union, and continues to participate in decisions on important changes in the future. Austria is represented in all European institutions such as the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, the European Council (body of Heads of State and Government) and the European Commission. Most of the EU budget is invested in the form of subsidies in the Common Agricultural Policy to support agriculture, in cohesion policy for regional development in the member states and in research and innovation. Important subsidy programs are Connecting Europe Facility, Horizon 2020, and ISA (Interoperability Solutions for European Public Administrations).

### *(iii) Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy*

Since January 2020, the Federal Ministry of Labour, Family and Youth is in charge of the former 'Section for Families and Youth' (which was before located in the Federal Chancellery). The tasks of this section compromise the Compensation Fund for Family Allowances, Family Allowance, Multiple Child Supplement, Child and Youth welfare, Childcare Allowance, Family Time Bonus, Labour and Social Law, Family Support (information, counselling, promotion, hardship compensation), Youth policy, Family rights policy and children's rights, European and

international family and youth policy, travel allowances, free rides and schoolbooks, family taxation, support centres etc.

*(iv) Influential lobbying groups*

No data was found.

*(v) Influential policy/research networks*

The Austrian Institute for Family Research at the University of Vienna (established in 1994) is an independent scientific institute that conducts application-oriented studies and basic research on the structure and dynamics of families, generations, genders, and partnerships. Among its main tasks are the cooperation with international research institutions (e.g., European Congress on Family Science; Generations and Gender Programme), family policy consulting, and extensive information and public relations work.

Furthermore, in order to protect the interests of children and adolescents in particular, an independent Children's and Youth Advocacy Office has been established in each federal state of Austria, based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Another influential policy network are the Child and Youth Welfare Services in each Federal State, which advocate for the rights of children and adolescents. Particular emphasis is given to preventive measures, but in cases of violence against children and adolescents, it has the obligation and right to interfere. The Child and Youth Welfare Service offers a wide range of information, counselling, advice and support for children, young people, and families (e.g. parent counselling and support; support regarding problems with paternity and maintenance payments; placement in crisis centres or crisis foster families; out-of-home care for children and adolescents staying with foster parents or in children's residential care homes; counselling and support for foster parents; training and further training of foster parents, adoptions etc.)

*(vi) The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support*

The legal basis for compensation of expenses for families is the Family Burden Equalization Act, which was passed in 1967 (Bundeskanzleramt, n.d.). The Family Burden Equalization Act expresses the political commitment for horizontal redistribution and is aimed to balance the financial burdens that families with children have in comparison to persons without maintenance obligations; its budget is therefore earmarked for family benefits. The resources of the fund are mainly financed by employer contributions and by compensation for income and corporation tax.

Among other things, family burden equalization provides funding for family allowance, childcare allowance, school transport allowances; and free travel for pupils, free rides and travel allowances for apprentices, free textbooks, maternity allowance, and the “hardship compensation” for families in need through no fault of their own. The financial aid and other support options are benefits of the federal government and are granted throughout Austria according to unified (federal) legal regulations. Constitutionally, however, each Austrian federal state may enact its own (provincial) laws in the area of family support and finance family allowances from federal state funds.

*(vii) The democratic system and main political parties; (unitary vs federal state structures; centralised vs decentralised structures)*

Austria is a democratic Republic consisting of nine federal states. The federal state principle means that the state tasks are separated between the federal government and the federal states. Currently, five political parties are represented in the Austrian Parliament: the Austrian Peoples Party (ÖVP), the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ), the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), the Greens, and the NEOS. The Austrian Parliament consists of two chambers: the National Assembly (Nationalrat) and the Federal Council (Bundesrat). The National Assembly is the main legislative body, where legislative tasks are accomplished at federal level by the National Assembly in accordance with the Federal Council (which represents the interests of the federal states in Parliament). Provincial Assemblies (Landtage) represent the interests the individual provinces.

*(viii) The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular (e.g., Ministry roles, national vs local/regional government roles)*

Austria has more than 380 family and partner counselling centres which are run by various institutions and are subsidised from the budget of the Ministry of Families and Youth. Typically, advice is given about topics including family planning and birth control, economic and social concerns of expectant parents, questions raised by lone parents, conflicts due to unwanted pregnancy, legal and social issues in families, mental problems, intergenerational conflicts, etc. Most counselling centres are equipped with a wide range of specialists; social workers, marriage and family counsellors, lawyers, psychologists, educationalists, etc. Counselling is free of charge and people in consultation have the right to remain anonymous. Of course, all counsellors are obliged to the strictest confidentiality. Supported family counselling centres are available in all districts of Austria. On average, there is one family counselling centre for every 20.000 Austrians. Special emphasis is placed on pregnancy counselling, counselling in cases of violence in the family, divorce and separation issues and counselling for parents with disabled

children (Familienberatung, n.d.). An annual sum of currently € 12.25 million is made available from the budget of the Family Equalization Fund for the funding of the Family Counselling Centres.

*(ix) The ways in and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policymaking and reviews*

Qualified experts (doctors, psychologists, social workers, lawyers) do make part of the service institutions but it remains unclear to what extent they are engaged in policymaking. Since 1966, the member of the government entrusted with the family agenda on matters relating to the equalization of family burdens and general family policy is advised by a Family Policy Advisory Board. Among the tasks of the Family Policy Advisory Board is advising in general family policy, providing expert opinions on economic, social, legal and cultural matters, the examination and statement on suggestions and demands of the family organisations. The Family Policy Advisory Board, which has up to 15 members, includes organisations that are particularly committed to promoting the interests of families. In addition, the Family Policy Advisory Board can call in experts. However, they do not have the right to vote. The members of the Advisory Board are appointed for four years and work on a voluntary basis.

As far as reviews and evaluations are concerned, experts are directly involved (e.g., research networks like the Austrian Institute for Family Research or the annual report of the Child and Youth Advocacy). In some reports, as the evaluation of the Federal Child and Youth Welfare Act, the voices of parents and adolescents were included with a survey focusing on educational support.

## **2.5 List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year 2000. For each policy document indicate**

*(i) Whether participation of families and young people have been mentioned in the document*

Not mentioned.

*(ii) The extent to which such participation has been implemented*

The Lifelong Learning Strategy LLL:2020 (Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur, 2011): Austria has committed itself, in 2011, to a reduction of educational poverty in terms of certificate and competence poverty and has adopted international benchmarks. The goals of the strategy are to halve the share of pupils at risk of reading literacy from 28% (according to PISA 2009 results) to 14% in 2020 and to reduce the share of early school leavers and those

leaving education early according to the EU 2020 indicator from 8.7% in 2009 to a maximum of 6% in 2020.

## **2.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services**

### *(i) The priorities in child welfare and family policy*

Child and youth welfare comprises services provided by public and private child and youth welfare institutions which help to support the rights of children and young people to promote their development and upbringing into self-responsible and socially competent personalities and to protect them from all forms of violence.

Another priority in the Austrian family policy is the compatibility of family and career.

### *(ii) The main types of family provision and support and key features (e.g., different types of cash support (universal and targeted, work-family reconciliation measures and children's/family services, childcare etc)*

Family support is a central part of the Austrian family support system and acts as a direct transfer payment aimed at compensating for costs that need to be carried by parents due to their maintenance obligation towards their children. In the Austrian federal states, there are separate laws on family support measures which are financed from provincial funds. In many federal states, leisure activities are also financially supported by means of a "family pass" (Bundeskanzleramt, n.d.b).

### *Maternity leave*

Maternity leave applies to workers, employees and apprentices and protect from giving notice or being dismissed by the employer as well as providing basic monetary security. Once the employer is informed about the pregnancy, the pregnant person no longer can be dismissed or given notice and is not allowed to work 8 weeks prior or after given birth. The pregnant person also has a right to maternity pay, which is paid as a substitute for missed income (Bundesministerium Digitalisierung ud Wirtschaftsstandort, 2021). Employees are entitled to maternity leave until the end of the child's second year (day before the second birthday) if they live with the child in a joint household. For the parent who claims it first, the maternity leave begins at the end of the protection period after the birth. The protection period usually lasts eight weeks, but can also be longer.

Childcare allowance was introduced in 2002 and can be claimed by mothers and fathers the day the child was born. From 2010 onwards, there were a total of five different types of benefit, including income-based childcare allowance and flat-rate childcare allowance. In addition, there are the partnership bonuses and a “family time bonus”.

Flat rate childcare allowance provides parents with an amount of 14.53 Euro to 33.88 Euro per day for a period of 365 to 851 days after the child was born (for one parent) or 456 to 1 063 days from birth of the child if both parents claim it (and go on maternity/paternity leave).

The Income-based system comprises 80% of the last income, up to a maximum of EUR 66 per day (around EUR 2,000 per month) for a maximum of 365 days after the birth of the child (if only one parent receives childcare allowance). If both parents claim childcare allowance, the period of entitlement is extended by the period of time during which the other parent has actually received it, up to a maximum of 426 days from the birth of the child (one parent can never receive more than 365 days of childcare allowance).

For fathers, adoptive and foster parents, there is an income-related childcare allowance which equals 80 % of a fictitious maternity allowance.

For births from March 1, 2017, onwards, the flat-rate system has turned into a central childcare allowance account, while the income-related system remains in force. While the flat-rate system offers the possibility of earning up to EUR 16,200 per year or up to 60 per cent of the last income from the calendar year before the birth in which no childcare allowance was received (limited to the third preceding year), the income-dependent system allows only a small amount of additional income, as it is an income replacement (Bundeskanzleramt, 2020; Familienberatung, nd.d).

#### *Partnership bonus*

If the parents have received flat-rate or income-based childcare allowance in approximately equal parts (50:50 to 60:40) and at least 124 days each, each parent is entitled to a partnership bonus of 500 euros (a total of 1000 euros for both parents) as a one-off payment upon application after the end of the total period of entitlement.

#### *Family time bonus (family month)*

Working fathers who devote themselves intensively and exclusively to the family immediately after the birth of their child can receive financial support for births from 1 March 2017. For working fathers who dedicate themselves intensively and exclusively to the family immediately after the birth of their child and interrupt their gainful employment, a “family time bonus” of 22.60 euros per day (thus around 700 euros) is provided for.

### *Family allowance (since January 2018)*

For new-born children until age three, families in Austria receive 114 Euros per month and child; for children aged three to ten, the amount rises to 121,90 Euros. For children from 10 to 19 years, families receive 141,50 Euros per month and children over 19 years families receive 162 Euros per month.

The total monthly amount of family allowance increases due to the sibling graduation for each child by 6.90 euros for each child if there are two children, by 17 Euros a month for three children and by 26 Euros for four children.

### *School-start benefit*

For children aged 6-15, each year in September families are granted 100 Euros per month for the beginning of the school year.

#### *(i) The types of funding involved such as state, charity vs private sector providers and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners*

The governmental child and youth welfare comprises services provided by public and private child and youth welfare institutions (social, legal, psychological, medical etc.).

#### *(ii) Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations*

The Austrian Federal Statistics Institute (Statistics Austria), as well as the Public Employment Service Austria and also other public institutions, annually publish an annual report on expenses in the welfare-system, which, however, does not cover evaluation of the impact or effectiveness of implemented measures in the welfare-system. The Austrian Institute for Family Research was assigned in 2013 to plan and conduct an evaluation that analysed and summarised the interdependencies between policy measures and their outcomes. In 2018, the Austrian Institute for Family Research also conducted an Evaluation of the Federal Child and Youth Welfare Act, that was adopted in 2013. This evaluation also included a survey focusing on educational support/full childcare provision from the perspective of parents and adolescents. In addition, the Children's and Youth Advocacy Office also publishes an annual report on their activities, focusing also on the problems and challenges that are faced by their clients.

#### *(iii) Limitations in national and official data and statistics*

The Austrian Federal Statistics Institute (Statistics Austria) reports mostly only the most recent data on their homepage and sometimes compares this data with the past in ten-year intervals (e.g., marriage rate in 2018, 2008, 1998, 1989, ...). Older data can theoretically be retrieved, and tables could be generated with the help of the "STATcube database", but in this case only

the most recent data could be successfully retrieved. However, thanks to numerous publications by research institutions (e.g., the annual report on families provided by the Austrian Institute for Family Research or the annual report on receipt levels of social benefits or childcare), as well as the data analysed and reported by the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF), most of the relevant data for this survey could be found.

As far as the identification of vulnerable groups in Austria is concerned, there is detailed data on the nationalities (and sometimes the educational background) of foreign citizens (e.g., their integration on the labour market, social benefit receipt levels), but there is only vague information about Austrian nationals with migration background/children whose parents only recently moved to Austria or also young people in the second or third generation in Austria. As noted above, in this group (which in Vienna makes up more than 50% of the population, and in many schools the vast majority), differentiation is mostly made between Turkey and former Yugoslavia and “other” as the country of origin, which is not representative of the diversity in real life.

## **2.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision. What are the prominent policy and practice developments related to family support services from children’s rights, social equality, and evidence-informed perspectives?**

*(i) What are the pressing policy, practice, and research challenges impeding developments?*

For a more specific and needs-oriented support of children, adolescents and parents, more specific information concerning risk groups and their needs has to be gathered. Evidence-based knowledge must be integrated in political decision-making (e.g., promotion of separated German-classes for children with non-German mother tongue against experts’ advice), which is currently not the case. Much emphasis has to be given to the educational sector, where the foundation for the later educational path of people is set. It would be important to have more social-workers and psychologists to provide all students with individual support and increase their well-being. The available infrastructure (e.g., Child and Youth Advocacy, free and anonymous service centres and hotlines, free tutoring for pupils, etc.) its use, as well as the participation in educational activities must be actively promoted and encouraged. Considering the diversity in Austria and the large number of families who have moved to Austria only recently and often do not have proficient German skills, culture-sensitive and multilingual counselling would be an option.

*(ii) What are the pressing gaps in provision?*

More support (resources such as social workers/psychologists or learning support educators to support the teachers; free digital infrastructure such as notebooks) for schools with a majority of children from disadvantaged families is needed. Another issue regarding social inequalities is the situation of the numerous unaccompanied minor refugees, that was not mentioned here, but can definitely be considered a pressing gap regarding children's rights and future prospects.

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### 3 BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA - National report on family support policy & provision

**Sanela Sadic & Kristina Sesar**

#### 3.1 Trends and issues related to demography

*(i) Fertility rates*

The total fertility rates in the period 2010-2019 according to the available statistical data (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2020) is as follows:

Table 1. *Fertility rates*

Year rate	Fertility
2010	1,27
2015	1,24
2016	1,26
2017	1,26
2018	1,25
2019	1,20

After the war (1992-1995) and due to poverty and a challenging social and political situation, these conditions caused a decrease in fertility rate since 2002, which is among the lowest in Europe with less than 1.3 children on average per woman of reproductive age. The emigration of young people at the optimal working and reproductive age (in the 20s and 30s) complicates the already poor demographic perspective. These trends reflect on all aspects of society in the short term, as well as have long-term effects.

The total fertility rate at the EU-28 level in 2017 was 1.59 (children per woman), while in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 2002, with the exception of 2009 and in 2012, the value of this indicator was lower than 1.3. Only Malta has a total fertility rate lower than 1.3, referred to as the “lowest-low” fertility (Billary & Kohler, 2004).

According to the statistics, after 2011, the number of parents without children has doubled.

*(ii) Families with children by number of children*

Four-member families present the majority in the total population structure. The latest data issued by the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2016) report a household structure with dominant number of four-member households, followed by three members, two members, and one member, respectively. Afterwards come bigger households with five members and more. The average number of children in the family is 1,68 (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2018a)

*(iii) Percentage of the population from 0 to 18*

Children (until 18 years of age) present 18% of the total population (UNICEF, 2020).

*(iv) Percentage of population over working (retiring) age*

The elderly population in Bosnia and Herzegovina makes 17% of the total population, with positive trends (BIH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, 2017).

*(v) Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities*

In Bosnia and Herzegovina there exist three major ethnic groups (Bosniacs, Serbs and Croats) together with other minorities. The war 1992-1995 caused drastic changes in political, social, economic, and cultural segments. In the post-war period, Bosnia and Herzegovina recorded drastic demographic changes. According to the last census held in 2013, only a few municipalities retained a multi-ethnic structure; the majority are almost ethnically clean. General statistics show that in the post-war period the ethnic structure is as follows: Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats, and Others.

Table 2

Ethnicity	%
Bosniaks	50,1%
Croats	15,4%
Serbs	30,8%
Others	3,7%

Note. (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2018b)

The major minority in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the Roma minority, which is the most sensitive and marginalized social group.

*(vi) Migration patterns*

According to the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2018), at the national level, the population number of immigration/emigration is 28.521 (2017). Thereof, the number of immigrants to:

- Federation of BiH is 19.098. It indicates a decrease of 2,8 % in comparison to the same period last year;
- Republika Srpska is 8.740. It indicates a decrease of 29,8 %, in comparison to the same period last year;
- Brčko District is 683. It indicates an increase of 0,3 % in comparison to the same period last year.

For the same period, the number of emigrants from:

- Federation of BiH is 19.379. It indicates a decrease of 5,6 % in comparison to the same period last year;
- Republika Srpska is 8.651. It indicates a decrease of 26,0 % in comparison to the same period last year;

- Brčko District is 491. It indicates a decrease of 10,9 % in comparison to the same period last year.

The majority of migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina were persons aged between 20-39 (14.159 people) which represent 49,6 % of total migration. With regard to gender structure, the share of the female population in total migration is 16.858 or 59,1% and male 11.663 or 40,9%.

The majority of migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina were persons between 20-39 years of age (14.159 people) which represent 49,6 % of total migration. As regarding gender structure, the share of the female population in total migration is 16.858 or 59,1%,and 11.663 or 40,9% males.

Research on internal migration is based on data collected by the Agency for the identification of documents, registers, and data exchange of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Statutory obligations for registration and deregistration of residence for all citizens of BiH is regulated by the Law on the permanent or temporary residence of citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Official Gazette BiH, No 32/01; 56/08).

Traditionally, Bosnia and Herzegovina is an emigrational country, but in the past two years, it was a transitional country for a high number of migrants on their way towards Europe.

Official data for migration (internal and external do not exist), but it has significantly changed in the past couple of years with a substantial migration transit through BiH.

### 3.2 Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles and children’s living arrangements

*(i) Family household types \**

Dominant family type is married couple with children, afterwards it is married couple without children, then female single parent families. The agency for Statistics in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2018b) shows the following family structures in numbers for 2013:

Table 3

Family household types	%
married couple with children	53,98%

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married couple without children	26,35%
mother with children	12,35%
father with children	3,01%
consensual couple with children	1,00%
consensual couple without children	0.89%

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Note. Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2018b)

*(ii) Marriage and divorce rates \**

Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2020) report that there were 19.911 new marriages during the 2019, divorced was 2790. Statistical analysis shows that after 2010, in the period 2011-2013, there was a significant decrease in the number of marriages, followed by a stabilisation period, and once again a decrease in 2019. In the past decade there has been an obvious increase in the divorce rate, while in 2019 there were naturally less marriages, and as a result, less divorces.

Table 4. *Marriage and divorce rates*

Year	Marriage	Divorce
2010	19.541	1676
2015	18.643	2963
2016	19.686	2773
2017	19.265	3022
2018	18.952	3091
2019	19.911	2790

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Note. Agency for statistics for Bosnia and Herzegovina (2020)

The divorce rate is getting higher in the past few decades, as a result, there is visible increased number of single-parent families. There is difference in divorce rates between urban and rural areas.

*(iii) Lone-parent families \**

Single-parent families in total number in the family structure for 2013 make almost 16% (Agency for statistics BiH, 2018b), with a large discrepancy between mothers and fathers (12,35% - mother with children, and 3,01% - father with children).

*(iv) New family forms such as same-sex couple households \**

As regarding the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons, the four criminal codes are harmonized to include hate crimes on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. Sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics are also explicitly prohibited grounds for discrimination since the 2016 amendments to the law on anti-discrimination. Same-sex couples are continuously discriminated against, as the legal system fails to recognize their social and economic rights, including the right to family life. The social inclusion of intersex and especially transgender persons, who are particularly marginalized, also needs to be improved. The prosecution of hate crimes and hate speech against LGBTI persons is insufficient. Physical assaults have not led to indictments so far. However, law enforcement officials and members of the judiciary have started to receive training on LGBTI issues. Events to raise public awareness on LGBTI issues take place regularly. In 2018 the Constitutional Court recognized that the authorities had violated the right to freedom of assembly of LGBTI persons and the prohibition of torture or inhuman or degrading treatment by failing to ensure the safety of the participants at the 2014 Merlinka Queer Film Festival as well as failing to take place regularly since 2014 with adequate public safety. LGBTI associations report growing difficulties in obtaining permits for public events; in May 2017 an LGBT march could not take place because the public authorities failed to deliver the due permits on time.

*(v) Family structures and changes across social groups*

Family structure according to the number of children (Agency for Statistics of Bosna and Herzegovina, 2018b) is as follows:

Table 5. *Family structure*

Number of children	
1 child	352.679
2 children	294.947
3 children	72.557
4 children	14.281
5+	4.746

There is no official data about number of children regarding different social groups, but traditionally, Roma families have more children than the national average.

*(vi) Children and youth living in institutions \**

Agency for statistics of BiH (2020) show that number of children in institutions was slightly changing in different periods (2014-760, 2015-997, 2016-970, 2017-1,070, 2018-965, 2019-1,121). Institutionalisation is still dominant trend in child protection. The biggest number of children in institutions regarding is in the age 15-18 (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2020).

Foster care and alternative solutions for children should be promoted more. Cash benefits and access to social services for vulnerable children need to be improved to prevent family separation, which in one third of cases is due to poor economic conditions or labour migration. Support needs to be provided to children leaving care institutions at the age of 18. The administrative capacities of the centres for social welfare need to be strengthened, as they coordinate multi-sectoral support.

*(vii) Children in out-of-home care such as foster care*

Foster care is a relatively new kind of service toward children and new legislation relevant to this area has been improved. The strategy is to bring all children into the foster families, but many children are still in the institutions. In 2019, only 19 children were in foster families (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2020). Institutional child protection is still prevalent. In the last 25 years, only one institution was closed as a result of proper planning within

deinstitutionalization (DC Most Zenica) while another institution (Dom za djecu Kiseljak Zvornik) had been closed and children were transferred to another institution for children without parental care.

The majority of children in institutions have both parents (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2020). Services within the community that enable children to grow up in a family environment are not adequately supported. Fragmented responsibility of the state, entity, and any other actors in creating and implementing family policy additionally results in an ineffective system.

According to the Bosnia and Herzegovina Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, in 2018 for one child in fostering there were three children in institutions.

The Book of Rules on Fostering is in force since 2014, while the first-ever Law on Fostering in FBiH was adopted by Parliament of FBiH in 2017, got in force in March 2018. This new law clearly stipulates the criteria for prospective foster carers, their duties and responsibilities, and highlights the need for their continuous training and education. The law also defines different types of foster care, and for the first time introduces a fee to be awarded to foster carers for their work. Most importantly, the law clearly states that children under three years of age should only be placed in family forms of care and not institutionalized.

#### *(viii) Home-based support*

This kind of service is still not developed for the elderly and persons with disabilities. Instead of home support and other services like day care centres, users get cash benefits. Cash benefits are not sufficient for decent living. Family solidarity is still high, and family members take care of other relatives. Children and adults without parental care usually stay in the institutions.

### **3.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare**

#### *(i) Poverty rates \**

Relative poverty rate in 2015 was 16.5%, while the poorest are bigger households with five and more members (poverty rates 20.2%), as well as one-member households (poverty rates - 18.5%) (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2018c).

Some statistics saw that even 58% of citizens live under the poverty risk and are socially excluded. In the period 2011- 2016, there was an increase in absolute poverty from 23% to 28% (Papić & Fetahagić, 2019).

#### *(ii) Employment/unemployment rates \**

According to the Labour Force Survey 2018, the unemployment rate is 18.4% (17.2% men; 20.3% women). At 38.8%, the unemployment rate is the highest among young people aged 15 to 24 (35.4% men; 45.5% women). The activity and employment rates are 54.2% and 44% respectively. Both rates are higher for men (66.4% and 54.7%) than for women (41.8% and 33%). The activity and the employment rates are by far the highest in the 25 to 49 age group (73% and 58.9%). Youth activity and employment rates represent 32.3% and 19.7% respectively. The level of informal economy in Bosnia and Herzegovina is estimated at 25.5% of the GDP and about 30% of all workers are in informal employment (Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2020)

Labour force survey 2019 (Agency for Statistics, 2019)

*(iii) Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage related to gender, age, ethnicity, migrant status and other social dimensions \**

Roma people and persons with disabilities are at higher risk, and employment possibilities are very limited. Migrant status is also specific since they are in transit and not interested in staying in the country is one problem, but the labour market is very limited even for domestic citizens, presenting a primary problem for this category.

*(iv) Patterns of education disadvantage \**

Bosnia and Herzegovina's level of human capital is hampered by poor educational outcomes and also suffers from a substantial brain drain. The country's education system is very complex and highly fragmented, as legal competences are largely allocated at the entity and cantonal level. This results in a lack of common standards for various levels of education, as well as in teacher training and performance evaluation. Teaching curricula are often outdated and not sufficiently aligned with the country's needs. This leads to wide skills mismatches, which is a major impediment, preventing graduates from entering the labour market. The number of pupils enrolling in pre-school education is slightly increasing but remains very low when compared with the EU average (in 2017/18 approximately 18% compared with 95.3% in EU for children from the age of 4 until the start of the compulsory primary education). In primary and secondary education, the number of enrolled children has started to decline in recent years. To some extent, this reflects demographic dynamics, such as declining net birth rates but also the emigration of young families. The share of those with high educational attainment stood at 10% in 2018, compared to 7% in 2009. Data on country-level public sector spending on education is currently not available. In 2018, Bosnia and Herzegovina participated for the first time in the OECD's PISA study. The results are expected by the end of 2019 only. The country's illiteracy rate stood at 2.8% of the 10 years + age group, according to the 2013 population census. This

is one of the highest in the region, largely as a result of a relatively high illiteracy rate among women (of 4.8%).

*(v) Major social welfare trends such as disadvantage risks, welfare benefit receipt levels \**

According to official estimates, in Bosnia and Herzegovina there are between 25,000 and 50,000 Roma people and the conditions in which the majority of the Roma families live can be characterized as a state of chronic, multidimensional poverty (UNICEF, 2018). UNICEF (2018) reports, according to the Multiple Indicator Survey (MICS) of the Roma population for 2011 and 2012 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, has shown that:

- The infant mortality rate among Roma is 24 per 1,000 live-born children, while the likelihood of dying before the age of five 27 per 1,000 live-born children.
- 21 percent of Roma children are of short stature, while eight percent of children are seriously lagging in growth.
- Only two percent of Roma children aged between 36 and 59 months are enrolled in organized early childhood education programs, while only four percent of Roma children that are enrolled in the first grade of primary school attended pre-school institutions in the previous year.
- Only one-half of Roma children (47 percent) that are old enough to be enrolled in primary school attend the first grade of primary school.

The other most vulnerable categories are children, elderly, victims of violence, and persons with disabilities. Social assistance is neither well-targeted nor needs-based oriented. Social protection law recognizes categories and criteria are very strict. As a post-war country the majority of the budget is spent on war victims.

There are no systematic measures to improve the situation of older persons. Persons with disabilities are among the most vulnerable groups. The country has ratified the Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (CRPD) in 1993. and its optional protocol. However multi-sectoral and comprehensive implementation mechanisms are not in place, in particular as regards accessibility and training. The law allows persons with disabilities to be deprived of legal capacity through a judicial process, which is in violation of the Convention.

Bosnia and Herzegovina need to implement the recommendations of the UN Committee on the rights of persons with disabilities from 2017. The country adopted a disability policy in May 2008 and both entities adopted strategic frameworks for the advancement of the rights and status of persons with disabilities following the expiration of the state-level policy. Bosnia and

Herzegovina do not have a uniform definition of disability and a database of persons with disabilities. Support is limited and varies depending on the origin of the disability, as persons with war-related disabilities (war veterans and civilian victims of war) enjoy priority over other persons with disabilities. However, persons with disabilities continue to face challenges regarding access to education, healthcare, and social assistance. The Council for Persons with Disabilities needs to be further engaged in all relevant processes. The authorities also need to improve data collection, including gender-disaggregated data on women and men with disabilities. A network of 74 community-based centres with multi-disciplinary teams provides quality and accessible mental healthcare services, in cooperation with the social welfare centres.

*(vi) Housing problems \**

In the post-war period, many citizens still did not return to their houses. More than two decades many people still live in the collective housing centres. Besides the problem of displaced persons and returnees, some other sensitive social groups have problems in housing like the Roma population, inadequate housing for persons with disabilities, as well as 18+children leaving institutional or other alternative care.

*Summary: The broader socio-economic context and trends which influences children's, parental and family circumstances and environments \**

The European Commission (2019), in the application of Bosnia and Herzegovina for membership in EU, report that almost a third (31.6%) of children aged 5-15 are at risk of poverty. Children in female-headed households and children in families with two or more children are substantially more likely to be poor. 4% of children are simultaneously poor and materially and housing deprived. Despite the high poverty and poverty-related social challenges, the social protection system is underdeveloped, while the effectiveness of social transfers is limited. Social benefits are extremely low, therefore insufficient to fulfill basic needs and targeting of social transfers is inadequate, making their effects on poverty reduction very limited. Only about one-quarter of social assistance benefits are granted based on needs assessment, while the other threequarters are status-based benefits, mainly to war-related categories of beneficiaries. On social inclusion and protection, there are no countrywide strategies on poverty reduction, social inclusion, and protection or a system at a countrywide level for monitoring policy implementation. In relation to persons with disabilities, institutional care is still prevalent. Services within the community that enables independent living are not adequately supported, and there is no comprehensive strategy of deinstitutionalization. At the entity level, there is a wide range of strategies and laws related to social inclusion and protection and their implementation systems. However, these are not enforced due to a lack of funding, inadequate procedures, standards

and referral practices, and a general lack of coordination. The household budget survey of 2015 is the most recent assessment of poverty in the country.

### **3.4 The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions, and actors' which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision**

*(i) Membership to the EU \**

NO

*(ii) Relationship with European Union*

Bosnia and Herzegovina presented its application for membership of the European Union on 15 February 2016. Subsequently, on 20 September 2016, the Council of the European Union invited the Commission to submit its opinion on this application. In the February 2018 Western Balkans strategy, the Commission stated that 'with sustained effort and engagement, Bosnia and Herzegovina could become a candidate for accession'.<sup>1</sup> At the EU-Western Balkans summit which took place in Sofia in May 2018, EU leaders reaffirmed their unequivocal support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans, and the Western Balkan partners recommitted to this perspective as their firm strategic choice. The EU leaders agreed on the Sofia Declaration and the Sofia Priority Agenda, outlining new measures for enhanced cooperation with the region in key areas such as security, rule of law and migration.

*(iii) Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy \**

The complexity of the system and the multiply structure of the state cause many problems in administrating rights and produce confusion about what is more complex for the Federation of Bosna and Herzegovina. The polarisation of the system between centralized (Republic of Srpska) and decentralized (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina) brings many confusions and pluralism in the system having serious consequences in the inequalities among citizens. The relevant ministries for social protection are the most influential in social policies and access to the rights of the citizens.

On family policy, social inclusion, and protection, there are no countrywide strategies. At the entity level, there is a wide range of strategies and laws related to social inclusion and protection and their implementation systems. There is a most recent Policy on Protection of Families with Children in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina which accompanies a draft of the Law on Protection of Families with Children in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, adopted by both Houses of FBiH Parliament, but is still in the process of public discussion.

However, these strategies and policies are not enforced due to a lack of funding, inadequate procedures, standards and referral practices, and a general lack of coordination.

Despite the high poverty and poverty-related social challenges, the social protection system in BiH is underdeveloped, while the effectiveness of social transfers is limited. Social benefits are extremely low and insufficient to fulfill basic needs and targeting of social transfers is inadequate, making their effects on poverty reduction very limited. Only about one-quarter of social assistance benefits are granted based on needs assessment, while the other three quarters are status-based benefits, mainly to war-related categories of beneficiaries. Social assistance is neither well-targeted nor needs-based, as there is no adequate system for data collection. Cooperation between social service centres and employment bureaus is not well established.

*(iv) Influential lobbying groups \**

Besides government representatives in social policies, nongovernmental organizations influence trends and policies at a large level. Besides them associations of social workers support professionals. Through advocacy, NGOs have succeeded in initiating several changes in the social protection system, like the deinstitutionalization of childcare facilities for children without parental care, the foster care model as an alternative model for children. The second big change is inclusive education for children with disabilities and their social integration, as well as the social inclusion of minority groups of children.

The institutional framework of family policies is Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina (state level), entity-level:

1. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (and Ministries in cantons)
2. Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Republika Srpska
3. Department for Health of the District Brčko.

The main actors in shaping social policy, including family policy, are social policy authorities and professionals within entity governments of the FBiH and the RD, are responsible for shaping social protection policy in the country. Therefore, political parties who are in power are having a leading role. Also, the important actors in creating and implementing family policy are intergovernmental organizations and various community-level actors (including nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), religious institutions and volunteers. Additionally, we have to consider the international community and media as very influential in creating the policies. But, most important, parents and children or young people are crucial actors, although in BiH

setting their capacity for influence and voice is modest and under-developed in policy and provision. Additionally, professional groups or individuals, market-based actors, and employers are among other potential or actual actors associated with any social policy development.

Family policy objectives should include financial support, strengthening family life (parenting, no violence), and service provision for children and families.

*(v) Influential policy/research networks \**

The Government, with its executive bodies, creates policies, drafts in laws and is the most dominant holder of social protection. In the post-war period NGOs become important partners in creating policies, as well as service development.

Academic community is the most important research capacity in the society. The problem is that financial support by the governmental institutions for research are limited. Thus, NGOs with significant financial resources initiate research, as well as invest in advocacy. The synergy of all these segments is crucial to creating inclusive politics, strategies, and qualitative services for the family.

*(vi) The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support \**

Bosna and Herzegovina has a complex government structure. It consists of two entities The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Srpska, and the Brčko District. The Republic of Srpska has a centralized system of government (entity level and municipality level). The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has a decentralized system of government (entity level, cantonal level (10), and municipality level).

The field of social protection in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the responsibility of the entities. The state of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its joint authorities have not substantial powers in the field of social protection. The Ministry of Civil Affairs at the state level has the coordination role and the mandate to coordinate the implementation of international regulations in this area, including reporting to international institutions about the state of beneficiaries, their rights, and allocations. The Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees has jurisdiction in monitoring the implementation of human rights and the respect of human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina through the implementation of international instruments in all areas of social policy.

The entities have their own social protection systems in accordance with their needs, resources, and strategic commitments. The Brcko District, as a separate administrative unit, has special regulations in this area.

At the level of the Republic of Srpska, the management system comprising social, family, and child protection is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare; at Federation BiH level, the jurisdiction is under the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy; and at the level of the Brčko district, the Department of Health and other services is responsible for social protection.

The responsibility of the implementation of social protection in BiH is divided between higher (entities, cantons) and lower government authorities (local governments). Centres for social work have been established at the local level (municipalities).

The democratic system and main political parties; (unitary vs federal state structures; centralised vs decentralised structures)

In pluralistic societies - societies that are deeply divided along religious, ideological, linguistic, cultural, ethnic, or racial lines, by forming separate political parties, stakeholders, media, flexibility required for the majority concept of democracy become hard to practice and follow. Many political parties exist but the most influential are nationalistic.

*(vii) The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular (e.g., ministry roles, national vs local/regional government roles) \**

Bosnia and Herzegovina have complex governance structures. It consists of two entities (The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Srpska) and the Brčko District. The Republic of Srpska has a centralized system of government (entity level and municipality level). The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has decentralized system of government (entity level, cantonal level (10), and municipality level).

The field of social protection in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the responsibility of the entities. The state of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its joint authorities do not have substantial powers in the field of social protection. There is no single strategic framework for the development of social protection and there are no common policies in this area. The Ministry of Civil Affairs at the state level has the coordination role and the mandate to coordinate the implementation of international regulations in this area, including reporting to international institutions about the state of beneficiaries, their rights, and allocations. The Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees has jurisdiction in monitoring the implementation of human rights and the respect of human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina through the implementation of international instruments across all areas of social policy.

The entities have their own social protection systems in accordance with their needs, resources and strategic commitments. The Brcko District, as a separate administrative unit, has special regulations in this area, although it has the size and importance as the local community in the area of creation and implementation of policies acts as an entity.

The responsibility of the implementation of social protection in BiH is divided between higher (entities, cantons) and lower government authorities (local governments). Most of the responsibility lies with the local government units (cities, municipalities) which for that purpose established centres for social work on its territories. At the level of the Republic of Srpska, the management system covering social, family, and child protection is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, at Federation BiH level the jurisdiction is under the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and at the level of the Brcko district, Department of Health and other services is responsible for social protection. The responsibility for the financing of social protection measures is divided between the entities, cantons, and municipalities. The 2012 Act defines that for the first time, the Republic of Srpska has taken a significant share of responsibility for the provision of funds to the realization of the beneficiary rights on its entire territory. The state-level of BiH does not have jurisdiction in the financing of social services. BiH institutions provide funds only for social services intended for asylum seekers and foreign nationals, victims of trafficking, who find themselves on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The ways in and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policymaking and reviews

They are not involved very much, but there is a positive trend to involve these groups in policy creation. Law regulations provide a sound foundation.

### **3.5 List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year 2000. For each policy document indicate**

#### *A) Whether participation of families and young people has been mentioned in the document*

Certain laws in social protection mention that service users are equal in their participation in creating an individual plan of protection with the aim of their engagement and best interests.

Regarding young people, there is a new legislation: Youth law for the better involvement of youth in policymaking.

UNICEF Bosnia and Herzegovina advocates for ongoing social protection reforms. These include redirecting resources towards cash assistance for children, or expanding coverage among vulnerable groups (e.g., reaching children with disabilities, extending to adolescents, ensuring greater coverage of young children). UNICEF advocates and mobilizes

stakeholders leading social protection reforms, and convenes actors to disseminate best practices and knowledge exchange.

Under the Enhancing Social protection and Inclusion programme (SPIS) and other initiatives supported by the European Union Delegation, relevant authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and UNICEF have jointly developed and implemented a Social Protection and Inclusion (SPI) model in one-third of municipalities.

The SPI model is a comprehensive, multifaceted, and long-term intervention, with incremental goals in key areas of social protection and inclusion policies and services for children. It is designed to help eradicate social exclusion, child poverty, discrimination, and inequality, to help everyone access basic social services in communities, and to meet international child rights obligations.

*B) The extent to which such participation has been implemented \**

It is important to mention that many NGO and their representatives in civil engagement especially of certain social groups have been very engaged in changing policies, but there is still a lot to be done.

### **3.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services**

In BiH, there is no specific legislation related to the provision of social services, but the whole system of social protection interventions (cash benefits, benefits in kind, the provision of services) are defined within the unified law on social protection. Social services are defined as all interventions that support beneficiaries with social needs which are not cash benefits or benefits in kind (other direct material resources). The social protection services that are defined as basic rights of the law on social protection in BiH are: accommodation in social care, care in foster care (foster placement), help and care at home, daycare, counselling, and social work services. By-laws (regulations and guidelines) developed detailed conditions and procedures for exercising those rights. Also, regulations have defined entities and the conditions under which they can provide this service, and it involves having minimum standards for necessary facilities, equipment, and engagement of professional staff.

The laws on social protection in BiH foresee the establishment of a large number of institutions of social protection which should ensure the provision of specific services designed for specific beneficiaries such as: homes for children and youth without parental care, homes for children and youth with disabilities, homes for persons with disabilities, homes for the elderly,

daycare centres for children and young users of social protection systems, daycare centres for adult users of social protection systems, help centre and home care, the centre for social rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, gerontology centre, centre for the education of children and youth, shelter, counselling and others.

The service providers are professionals who are defined by the laws on social protection, and include: social workers, psychologists, therapists, sociologists, educators, and professionals of related disciplines. They also include other professionals such as speech therapists, nurses, caregivers, educators, and others. The requirement conditions for the provision of social services are set quite wide. The main requirement is to possess adequate evidence (diploma, certificate) on completion of education and a certificate of general health capacity. The law stipulates to pass the professional exam after completion of the internship and only for newly employed people. The procedure and program of taking professional exams is regulated by special regulations. The supplementary training is left to the discretion of the employee and its employer's understanding. The laws on social protection in BiH have not foreseen procedures of accreditation and certification requirements of the program and work of professionals in the field of service provision.

*(i) The types of funding involved such as state, charity vs private sector providers and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners \**

The complex structure of the state of BiH is reflecting on financing rights in the field of social protection and social services in general. In the last few decades, there has been a shift from the total governmental social protection system into a mix-model of social protection in which governmental and non-governmental, as well as private institutions and organizations participate.

Missing state level in social protection reflects in all segments and diversities in rights and users. Very few rights are funding from the state level, like victims of trafficking and asylum seekers etc. In the Federation of BiH, very few rights are funded from the federal level, such as civil war victims. Cantonal ministries of social protection finance the largest number of rights, while municipalities also participate to a significant extent, civil donations, non-governmental organizations, as well as charity organization, participate in social protection of citizens.

The majority of social protection services are governmental. The private sector is dominantly present in elderly care. Private counselling centres are very few.

*(ii) Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations \**

This is very challenging in a decentralised system, especially in the Federation of BiH. Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided into two entities – the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska, which are politically autonomous to an extent, as well as the Brčko District, which is jointly administered by both. The entities have their own constitutions. Fragmentation of the system itself brings many problems in the implementation of rights, as well as issues concerning cooperation and defining responsibilities.

*(iii) Limitations in national and official data and statistics \**

Official statistical data are not consistent and very well organised and presented. Since the data for Bosnia and Herzegovina was not in the Eurostat, finding statistics was a demanding task for poverty rates and for the required periods even impossible.

Quantitative data are not interpreted in qualitative way, very often missing percentages.

**3.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision. What are the prominent policy and practice developments related to family support services from children’s rights, social equality, and evidence-informed perspectives?**

*(i) What are the pressing policy, practice and research challenges impeding developments?*

\*

Fragmentation of the system itself brings many problems in cooperation and collaboration.

*(ii) What are the pressing gaps in provision? \**

The integrative/universal approach does not exist. Services are fragmented and highly bureaucratic.

*(iii) What are the pressing gaps in provision? \**

The integrative/universal approach does not exist. Services are fragmented and highly bureaucratic.

**3.8 References**

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## 4 BULGARIA - National report on family support policy & provision<sup>3</sup>

**Tatyana Kotzeva**

### 4.1 Trends and issues related to demography

Following a steep decrease in birth-rates in Bulgaria in the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century, there is a slight increase and a stable trend at 1.5-1.6 TFR from 2008 onwards. The recent level of TFR in Bulgaria coincides with the EU average level (1,56) (Table 1).

Table 1. *Fertility rates*

2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
1,57	1,53	1,54	1,56	1,56	1,58

Source: Eurostat Database (2020)

#### *Families with children by number of children*

According to the national data from the last census (2011) the proportion of families by number of children is as follows (Table 2):

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<sup>3</sup> This report was consulted by a number of experts and researchers in the field of support for families and children in Bulgaria. Our thanks go to Assoc. Prof. Velina Todorova, member, UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Mariana Pisarska, Director 'Children's Policies', National Network for Children, Sofia, Bulgaria, Assoc. Prof. Elitsa Dimitrova, Institute for Population and Human Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and Assoc. Prof. Krasimira Mineva, Burgas Free University, Burgas, Bulgaria

Table 2. *Households by number of children*

Families with one child	63,3
Families with two children	32,4
Families with three children	3,2
Families with four + children	1,1

Note. Source: NSI-Bulgaria. Census 2011

Due to the mass emigration and decreased birth rates over the last three decades, the share of the families with one child has increased, and the share of the families with two or more children has decreased.

*Percentage of the population from 0-19 (%)*

There is a stable trend in the share of the young population (0-19 years) in Bulgaria for the last decade. The proportion of the young population is lower than the EU average level (20,4) (Table 3).

Table 3. *Population 19 years and under*

2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
18,7	18,2	18,3	18,5	18,7	18,9

Note. Source: Eurostat Database (2020)

*Percentage of the population over working (retiring) age*

A steady trend in the increase of the proportion of people aged 65+ for the last decade in Bulgaria has been observed due to the ageing of population. The proportion of aged people is slightly higher than the EU average level (20,3) (table 4).

Table 4. *Population over working age*

2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
18,2	20,0	20,4	20,7	21,0	21,3

Note. Source: Eurostat Database (2020)

*Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities. (Identify vulnerable groups as documented in the social policy literature)*

Vulnerable individuals and groups are those who are restricted in social life and in exercising their social rights. The reasons for social exclusion could be: living in extreme poverty or with low income; social and psychological factors; inaccessible environment; health and age problems; lack of sufficient social skills and education; lack or limited access or/and inadequate services; and prejudices and discriminative attitudes towards them (Platform ‘Social Policies’, 2009).

According to the Active Citizens’ Fund Bulgaria<sup>4</sup>, an indicative list of vulnerable groups includes: ethnic minorities; people living in poverty; unemployed; chronically ill people; people with disabilities; lone parents; families with three and more children; abandoned children and children in residential care; victims of violence; refugees, including unaccompanied minors. The listed groups are not mutually exclusive, and a person/group can refer to different groups at the same time.

The Roma population (5% of the whole population according to the census 2011) refers to the main vulnerable group in Bulgaria because of their low economic activity and low educational level. According to the SILC-2019, 64,8% of the Roma identify themselves as poor compared to 16,7% of the ethnic Bulgarians and 31,6% of the ethnic Turks.

*Migration patterns*

Since the beginning of the 1990s, there has been a negative migration balance in Bulgaria - the number of those who have left the country is higher than the number of those who have settled

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.activecitizensfund.bg/public/portfolios/view.cfm?id=21>

permanently in the country. Since migration statistics include only data on the registered emigrants, it is difficult to evaluate the real size of emigration flows that is estimated at 1-1.5 million people during the last three decades. The number of emigrants remains at a high level for the last decade (table 6).

Over the past ten years, a steadily growing trend in the number of immigrants has been observed, with the increasing share of the immigrants with Bulgarian citizenship (table 5).

Table 5. *Number of immigrants*

Year	Total	With Bulgarian citizenship	Third nationals, including the EU citizens
2013	18570	4682	13888
2014	26615	9502	17113
2015	25223	10722	14501
2016	21241	9254	11987
2017	25597	13060	12537
2018	29559	16169	13390

Note. Source: NSI [www.nsi.bg](http://www.nsi.bg)

Table 6. *Number of emigrants*

Year	Total	With Bulgarian citizenship	Third nationals, including the EU citizens
2013	19678	16036	3642
2014	28727	23849	4878
2015	29470	24487	4983

2016	30570	25795	4775
2017	31586	26992	4594
2018	33225	31263	1962

Note. Source: NSI [www.nsi.bg](http://www.nsi.bg)

## 4.2 Trends and issues related to family structures

### *Family household types*

For the period 2010 - 2015 there is a significant increase in the proportion of one member households, and a significant decrease in the share of households composed of three and more adults with dependent children. The proportion of households with three and more adults has also decreased. The other types of households remain at the same percentage (table 7).

Table 7. *Type of household as a percentage of total households (%)*

	2010	2015
Household composed of one adult	19,1	29,8
Household composed of one adult with dependent children	2,7	3,0
Household composed of two adults	25,4	26,6
Household composed of two adults with dependent children	18,8	19,5
Household composed of three or more adults	16,5	11,8
Household composed of three or more adults with dependent children	17,4	9,3

Note. Source: Eurostat Database (2020)

### *Marriage and divorce rates*

During the last decade the crude marriage rate (CMR) in Bulgaria remains at a level of 3 per 1000 persons, with a trend of a slight increase in 2017-2018 (table 8). CMR is a bit lower than the EU average level (4.4). The stable trend of a low level of marriage rate has been accompanied by a trend of a steep increase in cohabitations. According to the national statistics, during the last decade, two out of three children are born in cohabitations.

Table 8. *Crude marriage rate*

2010	2015	2016	2017	2018
3,3	3,9	3,8	4,0	4,1

Note. Source: Eurostat Database (2020)

The stable trend of an increase of the age for the first marriage has been observed for 2010-2018 (table 9). However, Bulgaria ranks among the countries with the lowest age for marriage.

Table 9. *Mean age at first marriage*

2010	2015	2016	2017	2018
26,6	27,0	27,1	27,3	27,5

Note. Source: Eurostat Database (2020)

Bulgaria has one of the lowest levels of crude divorce rate (CDR) which is lower than the EU average level (1.9 for 2015). For the period 2010 – 2018, CDR remains at the same level (table 10).

Table 10. *Crude divorce rate*

2010	2015	2016	2017	2018
1,5	1,5	1,5	1,5	1,5

Note. Source: Eurostat Database (2020)

By the indicator 'number of divorces per 100 marriages', Bulgaria occupies a mid-rank position among the EU countries (the average EU level is 43.7 in 2015). For the period 2010-2017, a slight decrease in the number of divorces has been observed in the country (table 11).

Table 11. *Number of divorces per 100 marriages*

2010	2015	2016	2017
45,3	37,8	39,6	36,4

Note. Source: Eurostat Database (2020)

### *Lone parent families*

According to the last census (2011), 14,7% of all families in the country are families with one parent, 80% of whom are mothers with a child/children. There is a trend of increase of one parent families over the last decades. For the period 2010 – 2015, the proportion of households composed of one adult with dependent has increased from 2.7 to 3,0% (table 7).

### *New family forms such as same sex couples*

There are no official statistics on same-sex couple households. In Bulgaria, same-sex marriages are illegal. The number of consensual unions (cohabitations) has been rapidly increasing since the early 1990s. According to the last census (2011) ,13,7% of all families function as consensual unions where partners live together without being legally married. Cohabitations are not recognized as a legal form of union according to the Family Code. At the same time, children born in cohabitations own the same rights in cases of entitlement for social benefits, such as child allowances, or in case of inheritance as children born in legal marriages. In most cases,

the fathers of the children born in cohabitations declare their fatherhood before a notary so as to be recognized as the father in the birth certificate.

*Family structures and changes across social groups*

Households with a single parent, with more than one child and households in which only one of the parents is employed are also more likely to face poverty risks and to have a low social-economic status.

*Children and youth living in institutions*

The number of children living in institutions has decreased by 90% over the last three decades due to the state policy for deinstitutionalization and placing children in alternative childcare, such as foster care, adoption, and residential small-size institutions (up to 10-12 children). All specialised institutions for children with disabilities have been closed down. The number of children in specialised institutions fell from 7,587 in 2010 to 495 in 2019 (93%). According to the Agency for Social Aid (ASA, 2019), by the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019, 21 residential institutions exist in the country, of them eight residential institutions for children aged 7-18(20), and 13 social institutions for children aged 0-3. The number of children at residential institutions is about 495.

*Children in out-of-home care such as foster care*

Foster care is part of the process of deinstitutionalization in Bulgaria and is combined with services to support families and children at risk. According to the Agency for Social Aid, the number of children placed in foster care has increased over the period 2012-2016, with some decrease in 2017-2019 (table 12). Almost all children are raised in professional foster families (1946 children in 2019), with a few in volunteer foster families (two children in 2019).

Table 12. *Number of children living in foster care*

2012	1144
2013	1943
2014	2275
2015	2323
2016	3195

2017	2320
2018	2205
2019	1948

Note. Source: Agency for Social Aid <https://asp.government.bg/bg/za-agentsiyata/misiya-i-tseli/otcheti-i-dokladi>

### *Home-based support*

As of December 31, 2019, 630 social services operate on the territory of the country for children, with a total capacity of 14,459 seats, as follows (ASA, 2019):

- 146 family type accommodation centres for children without disabilities with a total capacity of 1744 seats;
- 107 family type accommodation centres for children and young people with disabilities with a total capacity of 1437 seats;
- 87-day care centres for children and / or young people with disabilities; children and young people with severe multiple injuries with a total capacity of 2463 seats;
- 141 centres for Public Support with a total capacity of 5699 seats;
- 54 centres for Social Rehabilitation and Integration for Children / Youth, with a total capacity of 1852 seats;
- 21 centres for work with street children with a total capacity of 409 seats;
- 19 crisis centres for children with a total capacity of 196 seats;

## **4.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare**

### *Poverty rates*

- Population at risk of poverty (%)

Percentage of population at risk of poverty is at a level of 21-23 for the last decade (table 13). This level is much higher than the EU average level (17.1% 2018). Bulgaria ranks among the European countries with the highest level of population at risk of poverty.

Table 13. *Population at risk of poverty (%)*

2010	2015	2016	2017	2018
20,7	22,0	22,9	23,4	22,0

Note. Source: Eurostat Database (2020)

- Population aged 18 and below at risk of poverty and social exclusion (%)

Percentage of children who are at risk of poverty in Bulgaria is very high - in 2018 one out of three children is at risk of poverty (table 14). Over the last decade, the positive trend of decrease in children's poverty has been achieved. However, Bulgaria ranks among the countries with the highest level of children's poverty, and the country level by this indicator is 10% higher the EU average level (24,3% 2018).

Table 14. *Children at risk of poverty and social exclusion (%)*

2010	2015	2016	2017	2018
49,8	43,7	45,6	41,6	33,7

Note. Source: Eurostat Database (2020)

#### *Severe material deprivation rate*

Although there is a trend in the significant decrease of the proportion of people who suffer from serious material deprivation for the last decade, Bulgaria is among the countries with the highest proportion of poor people (table 15). The proportion of very poor people in the country is four times higher than the EU average proportion (5,9 -2018) of people in serious poverty.

Table 15. *Severe material deprivation rate (%)*

2010	2015	2016	2017	2018
45,7	34,2	31,9	30,0	20,9

Note. Source: Eurostat Database (2020)

### *Severe material deprivation rate for children*

The level of children's poverty was very high at the beginning of the last decade when almost one out of two children suffered from serious material deprivation. The trend goes steeply down, and in 2018 one out of five children lived in severe poverty (table 16). Despite the significant reduction, the proportion of children's poverty in Bulgaria is very high compared to other countries, and it is three times higher than the EU average level (6,6 – 2018).

Table 16. *Severe material deprivation rate for children (%)*

2010	2015	2016	2017	2018
46,5	37,3	36,1	33,1	19,1

Note. Source: Eurostat Database (2020)

### *Employment/unemployment rates*

- Total employment rate from 15 to 64 (%)

Bulgaria displays permanent growth in the employment rate for the last decade (table 17). The country's level of employment is among the highest in the EU (EU average level 67,7-2018). The employment rate for men is higher than for women. However, there is a long-standing tradition of high full-time employment for women in Bulgaria, which is one of the highest rates in the EU. According to the national statistics, the level of women's part-time employment is only 2.1% (2019) which is the lowest in the EU.

Table 17. *Employment rate (15-64)(%), total and by sex*

Year	Male	Female	Total
2011	61,2	55,6	58,4
2015	65,9	59,8	62,9
2016	66,7	60,0	63,4
2017	70,6	63,1	66,9
2018	71,5	63,9	67,7
2019	74,1	66,0	70,1

Note. Source: Eurostat Database (2020)

- Unemployment rate (%)

There is a downward trend in the unemployment rate over the last decade in Bulgaria, with a three times reduction of the coefficient 2011-2019 (table 18). The indicator is lower for women for the whole period. In 2019 the total unemployment rate in Bulgaria is 4,3% which is with 2,4 percentage points lower than the EU average level (6,7%).

Table 18. *Unemployment rate, total and by sex*

Year	Male	Female	Total
2011	12,3	10,1	11,3
2015	9,8	8,4	9,1
2016	6,4	5,9	6,2
2017	6,4	5,9	6,2

2018	5,8	4,7	5,3
2019	4,6	3,9	4,3

Note. Source: Labor Force Survey, Bulgaria, [www.nsi.bg](http://www.nsi.bg)

*Patterns of economic and employment disadvantages related to gender, age, ethnicity, migrant status, and other social dimensions*

- Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap is one of the main indicators of the gender equality policy. For the last decade, the gender pay gap in Bulgaria is at the level of 12-14% with a slight decrease after 2015 (table 19). In 2018, the average gross hourly wage of male employees is 12.5% higher than of female employees, which is lower than the EU average level (14,8% - 2018). Possible explanations of the difference in earnings between men and women could be found in sectoral segregation and overrepresentation of women in low-paid sectors (care and education) and jobs, women spending more time in unpaid (domestic) work, women's underrepresentation in top managerial positions, etc.

Table 16. *Gender pay gap (%)*

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
12,2	14,0	12,7	12,9	14,2	13,2	12,7	12,5

Note. Source: [www.nsi.bg](http://www.nsi.bg)

- Young people neither in employment nor in education and training (15-29)

The number of young people who are not employed nor engaged in education and training is decreasing for the period 2010-2019 (table 20). In 2010, one out of four young people did not work or study, while in 2019 one out of six people were NEETs (not in education, employment or training). The country's level by this indicator is higher than the EU average (12,5% -2019).

Table 20. *Young People (15-29) not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETs) (%)*

2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
23,5*	22,2	22,4	18,9	18,1	16,7

Note. \* break in the series. Source: Eurostat Database (2020)

- Employment by age groups

Age could be a reason for discrimination in the labour market and for diminishing job opportunities for people aged 55+. Data in table 21 shows the reduced employment rate for people aged 55-64. The obligatory pension age in Bulgaria (2020) is 61.6 years for women and 64.3 years for men, and this reason also stands behind the reduced employment rate at this age group.

Table 21. *Employment rate (15+ years of age) by age groups (%), 2019*

15-24	21,8
25-34	76,7
35-44	84,7
45-54	84,8
55-64	64,4
65+	6,5

Note. Source: Labour Force Survey, [www.nsi.bg](http://www.nsi.bg)

- Patterns of economic and employment disadvantages by ethnicity

Ethnicity is the main risk factor for being in poverty and social exclusion, and for having economic disadvantages and lower life chances. According to the Census (2011), Roma

minority presents 5% of the whole population but has the lowest employment rate (table 22) and the lowest level of education (table 23).

Table 22. *Employment rate (15-64) by ethnicity (%)*

Ethnic Bulgarians	87,7
Ethnic Turks	74,3
Roma	50,2

Note. Source: Census 2011. [www.nsi.bg](http://www.nsi.bg)

Table 23. *Educational level by ethnicity (%)*

	Ethnic Bulgarians	Ethnic Turks	Roma
Higher	25,6	4,9	0,5
Secondary	52,3	29,7	9,0
Primary	18,0	44,5	40,8
Elementary	3,4	13,4	27,9
Non-completed elementary and illiterates	0,9	7,5	21,8

Note. Source: Census 2011. [www.nsi.bg](http://www.nsi.bg)

- Patterns of educational disadvantages

Education is a strong predictor of people's opportunities in the labour market. The higher the educational attainment level, the higher the employment rate (table 24) and the lower the unemployment rate (table 25).

Table 24. *Employment rate (15-64) by education (%), 2019*

Higher	88,5
Secondary	74,6
Primary	39,6
Elementary and below	33,4

Note. Source: Labour Force Survey, [www.nsi.bg](http://www.nsi.bg)

Table 25. *Unemployment rate (15-64) by education (%), 2019*

Higher	1,9
Secondary	3,4
Primary	12,0
Elementary and below	19,0

Note. Source: Labour Force Survey, [www.nsi.bg](http://www.nsi.bg)

- Early leavers from education and training (18-24)

Early leaving from education and training is an obstacle to providing a qualified and skilled young labour force. As shown in table 26, the share of population aged 18-24 who have achieved a lower secondary education and not in further education and training has increased from 12,6% in 2010 to 13,8% in 2016. By this indicator, Bulgaria is 3,1 percentage points higher than the EU-28 average (10,7% -2016).

Table 26. *Early leavers from education and training (18-24) (%)*

2010	2014	2015	2016
12,6	12,9	13,4	13,8

Note. Source: NSI-Bulgaria. 2019. Sustainable Development of Bulgaria 2005-2016. S.

- Low reading literacy performance of students

Reading literacy focuses on the students' ability to use written information in situations they face in their lives. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), a standardized assessment developed by the OECD, targets students who are 15 years old and evaluates students' reading and understanding capacities. According to PISA, understanding level 1 and lower means that students are not able to demonstrate success in the most basic type of reading, and have serious difficulties in reading literacy as an effective means of enhancing and expanding their knowledge and skills in other areas. According to PISA 2015, the share of the 15-year-old students at level 1 or below of the combined reading literacy scale is 41,5% of all Bulgarian students at this age. This is the highest share compared to other EU countries and double the EU average level (19,7%) (NSI-Bulgaria, 2019).

- Lifelong learning

The quality of human resources is crucial for labour productivity and socio-economic growth. The participation of adults in education and training stimulates development of new knowledge and skills, and their effective adaptation to the new technologies. For the period 2010-2016, the share of population aged 25-64 in education and training (formal and non-formal) in Bulgaria has increased from 1,6 to 2,2% (table 27). This is one of the lowest percentages in the EU, and is much lower than the EU average (10, 8%).

Table 27. *Share of population aged 25-64 participating in education and training*

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
1,6	1,6	1,7	2,0	2,1	2,0	2,2

Note. Source: NSI-Bulgaria. 2019. Sustainable Development of Bulgaria 2005-2016. S.

- Major social welfare trends such as disadvantage risks, welfare benefit receipt levels

The main disadvantage risks concern people living in poverty, i.e. people with an income below 60% of the median - these are mainly long-term unemployed people (jobless people more than one year), people with disabilities, people aged 65+, lone parent families, and families with 3+ children. For the period 2015-2019, the poverty level stayed at 22-23%. The highest risk of poverty has been experienced by households with three and more children and by households with lone parents. The risk for the latter has increased from 35,2% in 2015 to 41,4% in 2019. The lowest risk for poverty has been observed for families with one child (Table 28).

Table 28. *Poverty by type of households (%)*

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total	22,0	22,9	23,4	22,0	22,6
Household composed of one adult aged >65	23,9	28,8	25,7	25,3	25,9
Household composed of two adults without children	21,4	19,1	22,0	20,5	23,2
Household composed of one adult with dependent children	35,2	47,4	35,7	30,0	41,4
Household composed of two adults with a dependent child	12,9	12,4	12,0	12,0	10,7
Household composed of two adults with two dependent children	14,5	22,7	21,7	19,7	16,9
Household composed of two adults with three and more dependent children	66,1	70,5	65,0	51,2	62,3
Household composed of two adults, at least one of them aged <65	21,8	12,7	20,0	16,8	21,4

Note. Source: SILC-Bulgaria, [www.nsi.bg](http://www.nsi.bg)

As shown in table 29, the greatest share of expenditure on social protection are allocated to pensions (49,3%) and healthcare (28,2%). Expenditures for children are in the third place and amount to 10,7%.

Table 29. *Expenditure on social protection benefits by function in Bulgaria, 2017 (%)*

Old age and survivors	49,3
Sickness/health care	28,2
Family/children	10,7
Disability	7,5
Unemployment	3,1
Housing and social exclusion	1,2

Note. Source: Eurostat Database (2020)

According to Eurostat Social protection statistics, in 2017, social protection receipts level relative to GDP is 18% in Bulgaria (the EU-27 average level – 28,2%). In Bulgaria, an absolute majority (at least 50%) of receipts in 2017 originated from the general government sector (central government, state and local governments, and social security funds).

The level of social expenditure relative to GDP is 17% in 2017, which is quite lower than the EU-27 average – 29,2%.

- Housing problems

According to data from SILC-Bulgaria, the country demonstrates one of the highest levels of overcrowding which is more than double the EU-27 average level (17,1%). The overcrowding rate for children in Bulgaria is also at a very high level, and is double the EU-27 average (17,1%) (table 30).

Table 30. *Overcrowding rate, total and age under 18 (%)*

	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total population	47,4	41,4	42,5	41,9	41,6
Population under 18	5,8	12,1	21,6	17,9	17,2

Note. Source: SILC-Bulgaria, [www.nsi.bg](http://www.nsi.bg)

As shown in table 31, the housing cost overburden rate is one of the highest in Bulgaria and is two times higher than the EU-27 average level (9,6%). Housing cost overburden rate for children in Bulgaria has also been at a very high level, and is double the EU-27 average level (8,1%).

Severe housing deprivation in 2018 was ten times the EU average level, while every second Bulgarian at risk of poverty is living in a household overburdened by housing costs. Social housing policies are decentralised, without a strategic framework, and housing benefits are a negligible proportion of total benefits.

Table 31. *Housing cost overburden rate, total and age under 18 (%)*

	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total population	5,9	14,8	20,7	18,9	17,9
Population under 18	5,8	12,1	21,6	17,9	17,2

Note. Source: SILC-Bulgaria, [www.nsi.bg](http://www.nsi.bg)

*Summary: The broader socio-economic context and trends which influence children's, parental and family circumstances and environments*

Bulgaria ranks with the highest level of population at risk of poverty among the EU-27 countries. The percentage of children who live at risk of poverty in Bulgaria is very high although there has been a decrease in poverty over the last decade. In 2018, one out of three children is at risk of poverty and one out of four children suffers from severe material deprivation. Bulgaria ranks among the EU-27 countries with the highest level of children's poverty and the country level is 10 percentage points higher the EU average level. The main disadvantage risks concern people living in poverty, i.e. people with an income below 60% of the median- these are mainly long-term unemployed people (jobless people more than one year), people with disabilities, old age people, children living in families with more than two children. Due to the low economic activity and low educational level of the Roma population, Roma is the most vulnerable group and most of the Roma population are beneficiaries of the social aid system. 13,8% are the early leavers from education and training with a lower secondary education at most. What is worrying is the increasing proportion of students – 41,5% of all Bulgarian students at the age 15 - who show low reading literacy performance according to PISA 2015.

Income inequality has started to narrow, but remains high. In 2018, the income share of the richest 20% (S80/S20) of the population was almost eight times that of the poorest 20%, which is the highest in the EU, where the average ratio is 5.17. The growing social inequalities have induced a big differentiation of families in regard to their living standard. Well-off families have a quality of life higher than the families with low incomes, and they can provide better health and education for their children and better care for their elderly relatives unlike those members of the families with low-pay and insecure jobs who can rely more on state benefits and informal relatives' networks.

#### **4.4 The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions, and actors' which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision:**

*(i) Membership to the EU; YES*

Bulgaria is an EU member state since 2007.

*(ii) Relationship with European Union (not more than 10 lines)*

The main framework for implementation of the country's social and family policy is based on the European social model. Through the Social OMC (open method of coordination for social protection and social inclusion) the EU provides a framework for national strategy development for social protection and investment, as well as for coordinating policies between Member States on issues relating to: poverty and social exclusion, health care, long-term care, pensions, and access to social protection.

The European Pillar of Social Rights is accompanied by a ‘Social Scoreboard’ which tracks trends and performances across EU countries in three areas related to the principles under the Pillar. The Scoreboard feeds into the European Semester of economic policy coordination and serves to assess progress towards a social ‘triple A’ for the EU as a whole. The main targets of the national social policy are directed towards reducing poverty and social exclusion, narrowing social inequalities, coping with a demographic crisis, including raising the birth rate, achieving gender equality, and guaranteeing high employment of men and women.

*(iii) Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy*

The vision, directions and measures of the official social policy are defined by the ruling parties. The political parties are of crucial importance for passing social legislation related to children and families.

The leading ruling party in the Bulgarian Parliament is the centre-right GERB – Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria which is currently in coalition with the nationalistic coalition of parties called ‘United Patriots’.

Recently, two nationalistic parties from the government coalition managed to stop two very important initiatives in the social policy area – the Strategy for the Child 2020-2030 and the entry into force of the Social Services Act. These parties have probably managed to mobilize thousands of people through social media and street protests, although not explicitly backing up those actions, against the liberal legislation and strategy. The basis of their opposition is the support for the so-called ‘traditional family values’, rejection of the state intervention into the family, prioritizing parents’ rights over the rights of children, etc. The Bulgarian Socialist Party as the biggest opposition party in the Parliament joined this movement and contested the Social Services Act before the Constitutional Court<sup>5</sup>. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church backs the movements against adoption of the updated Strategy for the Child.

*(iv) Influential lobbying groups (not more than 10 lines)*

The NGO sector has a key role to play in setting social policy priorities, providing social services, and advocacy campaigns in support of children and families. The National Network for Children (NND) is the biggest and influential NGO in protection of children’s and families’ rights. NND brings together 152 NGOs from all over the country. NND is an effective lobbyist for children’s

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<sup>5</sup> After a six-month delay the Social Services Act entered into force on July 1, 2020

rights, and its activities have been insulted by the conservative political forces over the last years.

Elected in May 2020, the Civil Society Development Council (CSDC) is an advisory body to the Council of Ministers for the development and implementation of policies in support of civil sector in Bulgaria. Among the 14 member organizations of CSDC are the following NGOs with a focus on children's rights and family support: Bulgarian Centre for Non-for-Profit Law (BCNL) – the leading NGO that takes part and has influence on the drafting of the new social policy towards families, groups in vulnerable situations that culminated into the new Social Services Act. BCLN is part of all recent progressive legislative activities – revisions of the legislation on NGOs, draft Law on supported decision-making, social services act, etc.; 'Parents' Association – NGO in support of family values, children's and parents' rights, ecological education, improving development of children's health care, violence prevention, etc.

'For Our Children' Foundation – NGO supporting parents for prevention of children abandonment, foster care and creating teams of professionals for child protection. An active lobbyist in ECEC.

'Bulgarian Fund for Women' which supports local NGOs working on gender issues and empowerment of girls and women.

'The System Kills Us' is the name of a Bulgarian protest movement and association of mothers and legal guardians of children with disabilities, which organized massive protests in 2018 and 2020. Due to their efforts, a new Personal Assistance Act was adopted.

In recent years, there have been strong parents' protests in support of 'traditional family values' and expressing parents' anger against "Draft of the National Strategy for the Protection of the Child 2019-2030", against sexual education and gender ideology at school and against the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). From an informal group that grew into an Association 'Parents United for Children', it managed to put pressure on the government to stop or postpone important legislative initiatives in the field of family and children's support.

*(v) Influential policy/research networks*

Children's and family wellbeing issues have been researched in academic units (Institute for Population and Human Studies and Institute for Philosophy and Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and in different Universities) as well as in non-governmental organizations in collaboration with researchers, professionals, and advocacy activists. The main topics of research and policy recommendations comprise the effectiveness of the process of de-

institutionalization (The Know How Center for Alternative Childcare, 2017), early childhood education and care (Zahariev et al, 2010; Iossifov et al, 2018; Kotzeva et al, 2019), strategic vision for family policy (NNC, SDP, IPHS-BAS, 2016a,b; NNC, 2016), family values and positive parenting (Kotzeva, 2020), parenting support and parenting policies (World Bank, 2019), legislative grounds of family policies (Todorova, 2019), effects on children left behind by their parents who live and work abroad (Kabakchieva et al, 2014), children's and young people's voices (UNICEF-BG, 2018b), gender pay gap (Stoilova et al, 2012), male participation in childcare (Parents Association, 2014), gender equality and migration (Kmetova et al, 2018), domestic violence, human trafficking and their elimination, children's anti-social behaviour (Animus Association, 2014a, 2014b; Demetra Association, 2015), life-work balance (Kovacheva, 2010; Dimitrova, 2019), family counselling and therapy, training in parental skills (Mineva, 2003; Institute for family therapy; Institute for social work and practices, Child and Space Association, 2015).

*(vi) The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support*

Over the last two years, there has been a delay in key reforms related to children's and families' wellbeing. In 2019 the government withdrew the draft of the National Strategy for the Child 2019-2030 due to a negative public reaction led by the extreme right-wing and religious organizations, including the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. In December 2019, the Social services Act which was adopted earlier by the Parliament and should have come into force on January 1, 2020, was postponed for six months. The Act promulgates 'integrated services' which is a key deficit in way health, social and educational systems function so far.

Additionally, the government's refusal to plan and implement policies for children in 2019 and in 2020 was manifested and strengthened in the abandonment of several draft bills: Bill amending and supplementing the Family Code (2016) and the Draft Law on Diversion from Criminal Proceedings and Imposing Educational Measures on Minors (2018); the result of a commitment to child justice reform previously made in 2012.

*(vii) The democratic system and main political parties; unitary vs federal state structures; centralised vs decentralized structures) (not more than 10 lines)*

The Constitution proclaims that Bulgaria is a Parliamentary Republic with one chamber directly elected and permanently acting National Assembly (Parliament). The Parliament is vested with legislative authority and parliamentary control. It consists of 240 members elected for a four-year term. The Republic of Bulgaria is a unitary State with local self-government (art. 2 of the Constitution of 1991). Article 5 declares the Constitution the supreme Law of the country, and no other Law shall contravene it, and that the provisions of the Constitution shall apply directly.

Article 8 of the Constitution declares the principle of the division of power among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches.

*(viii) The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular (e.g., Ministry roles, national vs local/regional government roles); (not more than 10 lines)*

At national level, the key state bodies responsible for children's and family policy are: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Justice and the State Agency for Child Protection (SACP) to the Council of Ministers.

The system is centralized – at the central level responsible for the family support (via cash transfers and social services) is the Agency for Social Assistance to the MLSP. It has regional branches – Regional Directorates in 28 cities, as well as Child Protection Departments (CPD) to the Social Assistance Directorates (SAD) at the level of the (big) municipalities. CPDs are responsible for child protection – in cases of children at risk. CPD – SAD are mandated by the Child Protection Act to decide on measures for child protection; some measures can be implemented by social services – within the family or after the placement of the child in care in the child's best interests – kinship or foster care, adoption or residential care. The placement of the child in care (or for adoption) is decided by the court.

*(ix) The ways in and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policymaking and reviews; (not more than 10 lines)*

The grass-root protest movements are an influential instrument for political pressure. The protest of mothers of children with disabilities was also among the most visible advocacy and lobbying campaigns in 2018. Mass protests were organized for several months under the slogan 'The System Kills Us'. As a result of this campaign, a new Law on Personal Assistance was adopted, which allocates an additional BGN 150 million (approximately EUR 75 million) to provide social assistants to people with disabilities, including children. In addition, the vice prime minister had to resign as a result of the negative statements he made about the mothers and their aims.

Another example concerns the big public debate in 2018 on the Istanbul Convention. A number of NGOs advocated for the convention ratification, while conservative civic groups, the Orthodox Church, and some political parties, including the Bulgarian Socialist Party and the United Patriots, opposed ratification of the treaty that was later withdrawn by Parliament.

The Children's Council is an advisory body to the Chairman of the State Agency for Child Protection (SACP), which works in compliance with the basic principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Child Protection. Its members are 33 children under the age of 18 who organize various initiatives for the promotion of children's rights and children's participation, and express opinions on draft regulations.

Another channel to collect opinions of the NGOs activists, researchers, professionals, and lay people is the website of the Council of Ministers with its portal for public consultations<sup>6</sup>. The strategic documents, action plans and programs are periodically uploaded for a certain period and people can post their comments and recommendations. The results of the public discussions are used in the development of the strategic documents and initiatives.

The National Network for Children (NNC) produces an annual Report Card (NNC, 2020a) evaluating whether the government has fulfilled its commitments to the children. The authors of this document are experts from civil society organizations who work daily with children and families, as well as children, young people, parents, and professionals. These participants evaluate the progress of the government in eight key topics: Child welfare, Protection of children from all forms of violence, Early childhood development, Child health, Education, Family environment and alternative care, Justice for children, and Child participation.

A good practice to encouraging child and youth participation is the 'Megaphone' platform of children and young people from organizations - members of the National Network for Children. With the help of this constantly working and open community of children, the organizations find the best ways for collaboration. Children consult and participate in the NNC activities, and the NNC support their ideas and work (NNC, 2020a).

#### **4.5 List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year 2000. For each policy document indicate**

*(a) Whether participation of families and young people has been mentioned in the document*

- Child Protection Act (CPA) (2000)
- National Strategy for the Child (2008-2018)
- National Strategy 'Vision for Deinstitutionalization of Children in the Republic of Bulgaria' (2010-2025)

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.strategy.bg/Default.aspx?lang=bg-BG>

- The HealthCare Act (2014)
- National Health Strategy 2020
- National Program for Improving Maternal and Child Health (2014-2020)
- Pre-school and School Education Act (2016)
- National Strategy on the Child (2019 – 2030) (draft, withdrawn by Parliament in 2019)
- Act on Social Services (2020)
- Domestic Violence Protection Act (2005)
- National Programs on Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection
- Act on Family Benefits on Children (2003)
- Act on Social Assistance (1998)
- National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Promotion (2020)
- Strategy to Reduce the Share of Early School Leavers (2013-2020)
- Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities (2015-2020)
- Act on Gender Equality (2016)
- Act on Mediation (2004)

All mentioned legislative documents have addressed children's, young people's and families' needs as beneficiaries of the social, health and educational services provision.

Children's and families' participation has been explicitly stated in the following legislative documents:

Child Protection Act (CPA) (2000) is the key legislation that places the child in the centre of state policy. The concept underlying the CPA is that the child is a legal subject and not a passive object of the care of the state and society. According to Art. 15 of the CPA hearing the child in court proceedings is obligatory.

National Strategy 'Vision for Deinstitutionalization of Children in the Republic of Bulgaria' (2010). Ensuring the child's right to live with their parents is one of the priorities in the childcare reform implemented through the process of deinstitutionalisation. While implicitly upholding the

concept that the family is the best environment for the child's development, the CPA and other legislative documents contain no guidelines as regards developing parental skills and implementing family-oriented approach through specific policies addressing the age in which this is most appropriate and needed, i.e., early childhood. The measures for social support and for child protection are not age specific

The HealthCare Act (2014), National Health Strategy 2020, National Program for Improving Maternal and Child Health (2014-2020) The Healthcare Act (last amended in 2016) sets out the general provisions on the rights of children as patients and child healthcare. It regulates the most valuable aspect of the Bulgarian child healthcare system: the right of all children to receive full medical care, free of charge, until 18 years of age, and the right to unlimited access to health services provided by both a general practitioner and a paediatrician.

Pre-school and School Education Act (2016). The new changes are mostly concerned with children in critical situations that have occurred as a result of continued difficulties and multiple risk factors in their lives. This is the so-called inclusive education that concerns children with disabilities and with special needs. Parents' participation and student government have been regulated in the separate sections of the Pre-school and School Education Act.

National Program on Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection (2020). The following measures stated in the document include children's and citizens' participation: maintaining a national telephone line for children victims of domestic violence, providing special services for children; like Children's Advocacy Centres, organizing campaigns with renowned people to raise public consciousness and sensitivity toward domestic violence, etc.

#### **4.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services**

##### *(i) The priorities in child welfare and family policy*

The National Strategy for Child Protection (2008-2018) outlines the following priorities:

1. Reducing child poverty and creating social conditions for children's social inclusion.
2. Ensuring equal access to quality pre-school and school education for all children.
3. Improving children's health.
4. Encouraging children's participation in the formation and implementation of policies related to their rights and responsibilities.

As about the scope and priorities of family policy there is no one strategic document for systematic view on family policy. Family policies are supposed to promote greater participation of women/mothers in the labour market, to reduce families' poverty risks, to provide work-family balance, to enhance child development and early education, and to activate a demographic oriented goal for raising more children.

*(ii) The main types of family provision and support and key features (e.g., different types of cash support (universal and targeted, work-family reconciliation measures and children's/family services, childcare etc.) (no line limit here)*

Childcare policies: parental leave schemes, cash benefits, family allowances, the latter are directed towards families with low economic status, most of the family benefits are means tested and targeted towards low status families; a few of the family benefits are universal such as one-time bonus at childbirth and adoption.

Health services: organized through General Practitioners and pediatricians; health is free for children up to 18 but parents have to pay for additional check-ups, procedures, tests, and medicines. Bulgaria still does not have a modern National Multi-profile Pediatric Hospital.

Educational services: preschool education in kindergartens is paid in most municipalities but taxes are not high; in some municipalities daycare centres and kindergartens are free for disadvantaged families; there is a significant deficit of state-run crèches and kindergartens in the capital and in the three biggest cities.

Social services: The main driver in the development of social services for children and families is the process of deinstitutionalisation of children at risk. Social services are targeted mainly to children at risk – children in need of care, children with disabilities, child victims of violence, etc. Access to these services is regulated by the child protection system, through a referral by child protection departments under the regional Social Assistance Directorates.

New services and comprehensive support for children are still under consolidation after the initial de-institutionalisation process was accomplished. The number of social services for the support of children and families in the community, with consultative and day-care alternatives including foster care services, has increased threefold since 2010, largely piloted with the ESF. There is scope in the local and national budgets to better ensure the sustainability, quality, and accessibility of services for all users.

Besides social services, provided at municipality level, NGOs are also providers of social services for families and children at risk including violence, disabilities, etc. For example, within the project 'Social Inclusion' (2010-2015) funded by the World Bank, Centres for integrated

services for children aged 0-7 years were built in 66 municipalities. These Centres prolonged their activities in the next years through the European funds from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. These Centres provide social services such as development of parental skills and consultancy and support for families.

*(iii) The types of funding involved, such as state, charity vs private sector providers and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners*

The main providers of services to families and children are municipalities and NGOs licensed as service providers. Less than 20% of all services are provided by NGOs. The main funding for services comes from the state budget, additionally from municipalities' budgets, European funds, private donations and foreign sponsors.

*(iv) Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations*

Generally, policy monitoring and programs' evaluation are not part of the implementation of different policies and practices. Exceptions concern large-sized projects funded by foreign organizations like UNICEF and the World Bank or by the European Social Fund. For example, projects in the field of deinstitutionalization and provision of alternative childcare services as well as projects in providing integrated social services for children aged 0-7 have been evaluated by independent evaluators (World Bank, 2016; Sammon et al, 2017). Three monitoring reports of the Action Plan for implementation of the National Strategy "Vision for deinstitutionalization of children in the Republic of Bulgaria" for the period 2010-2013 as well as the final report "Comparing costs and benefits of different models of childcare" (2011) have been implemented.

*(v) Limitations in national and official data and statistics*

The lack of a comprehensive statistical database of indicators in the field of child and family well-being in Bulgaria is a serious deficiency, which obstructs the solid evidence base that should underlie policies on children and families (Iossifov, 2018; Todorova, 2019). Some of the examples of information deficits that can be mentioned are the following: there is no unified and functioning at national level registration system of the cases of children victims of violence; there is no registration of terminated adoptions and the number of these children placed in residential care; there is no registered information on number of children whose parents live and work abroad and whose relatives (grandparents, etc.) take care of them.

**4.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision. What are the prominent policy and practice developments related to family support services from children's rights, social equality and evidence-informed perspectives?**

- ✓ The reduction of number of children raised in institutional residential care (from 30000 at the end of the 1990s to approximately 500 in the last years) and the development of alternative forms of childcare as foster care, adoption and community services is an indisputable advance in the protection of children's rights. At the heart of the progress are two key documents: Child Protection Act (2000) and National Strategy 'Vision for De-institutionalization of Children in the Republic of Bulgaria' (2010), that fully proclaim the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Todorova, 2019).
- ✓ There is a certain improvement in the education system due to funding growth policies and regulatory provisions for the reforms. In spite of problems with the quality of education in the low-populated areas and functional illiteracy, progress has been achieved in the implementation of effective dropout preventive measures at schools, tackling the teachers' shortage, increasing resources on vocational education and training, and strengthening formal inclusive education (Mircheva et al, 2019).
- ✓ The tradition of women's full-time employment has existed for decades, with only 2.1% of women in part-time work (the lowest in EU). The country has a very generous system of maternity and parental leave with 410 days of well-paid leave at 90% compensation of the earnings and a statutory two-week paternity leave. Parental leave is a family entitlement and can be divided between parents and working grandparents as they choose. There is also paid leave to care for sick dependents (children and others) up to 60 calendar days per year (Dimitrova et al, 2020).

(i) *What are the pressing policy, practice and research challenges impeding developments?*

*Policy challenges*

- ✓ There is no coherent and integrated family policy in Bulgaria (NNC, SDP, IPHS-BAS, 2016a). Regulations of the state family support can be found in more than 20 strategic documents, acts, and subordinate documents (NNC, 2016).
- ✓ The development of parenting policy in Bulgaria can be assessed at moderate level, with a strong emphasis on sector-specific parental counseling, provided through a combination of universal and targeted services. There are some attempts to improve coordination between sectors, but there are no systematic approaches to monitoring the needs of Bulgarian parents and their priority areas (World Bank, 2019).
- ✓ The legislative and political framework is overly focused on children at risk, rather than on a wider understanding of support for all groups of children and parents, including children at an early age, before the risks manifest themselves (Todorova, 2016).

- ✓ Bulgaria continues to design policies and initiate regulatory changes that are not based on evidence data but on party goals, without any clear vision, political will and professionalism on the part of government institutions (NNC, 2020).
- ✓ The last two years the government stopped crucial documents related to children's and family's wellbeing: Social Services Act (2020), National Strategy for the Child 2019-2030, Bill amending and supplementing the Family Code (2016) and the Draft Law on Diversion from Criminal Proceedings and Imposing Educational Measures on Minors (2018). There is a strong opposition from the right wing, religious, and conservative movements and parties against children's legislation and in protection of the so-called traditional family values (NNC, 2020).
- ✓ Bulgaria has no law or policy document entirely devoted to early childhood development and care (ECEC). The legislative and political framework concerning ECEC is contained within the sectoral laws and policies in the healthcare, education, and social sphere (Iossifov, 2018). A group of experts started preparation of Strategy on ECEC but it was stopped by the government in 2019.

#### *Practical challenges*

- ✓ Most of the monetary benefits are directed towards poor families with children but without substantial effect on the improvement of children's wellbeing. The level of children's poverty is very high – about 400 000 children, i.e., one in three children is at risk of poverty and social exclusion (NNC, 2020). Significant income inequality is observed among families and weak influence on the social payments. The social exclusion of children with disabilities or with chronic and rare diseases continues to be clearly pronounced.
- ✓ Issues regarding the quality of alternative care for children in residential services in the community remain unresolved (NNC, 2020).
- ✓ Parents are not actively involved in preschool and school life of their children. They are not part of the decision-making process at the kindergarten and school management. The kindergarten and school management have no responsibility to collect and consider parents' opinions in a regular way. Often teachers blame parents for their passivity and ignorance of their children's school life but at the same time there are no strict regulations of relationship between parents and teachers.
- ✓ Professionals working directly with children are overwhelmed by the feeling that legal provisions are created without regard to their opinion or to the needs stemming from

direct work with children and families. Along with the low pay and lack of positive communications with some parents, it also attributes to the perception of a neglectful attitude towards their work on the part of society and the state (Zahariev et al, 2010; Iossifov et al, 2018).

- ✓ The pace of the social services reform is slow and has been further delayed. The entry into force of the new law on social services, adopted at the beginning of 2019, was postponed by six months at the end of the year, creating further uncertainty. The new provisions envisage addressing the chronic underfinancing by introducing rules for more accurate determination of standards for financing of social services. A National Map of Social Services, to be prepared jointly with municipalities, will aim at addressing the uneven territorial distribution and insufficient coverage and quality of services. A new Agency that will have an oversight function is envisaged to be created. A dedicated ESF project will support the setting up of the methodological framework, the update of the quality standards, and the qualification of the staff of the Agency. However, the postponement of the entry into force of the reform creates uncertainties about the impact of the new provisions.
- ✓ In spite of the legislative amendments and strategic goals programmed to encourage child participation, there is still lack of understanding of what authentic child participation means. The dominant attitude views the child mostly as an object of influence and not so much as an independent subject and a full-fledged person with all rights (NNC, 2020). Additionally, lack of effective mechanisms for implementation of children's participation, lack of financing as well as the lack of experience in working together with children and families complicate the process of active children's involvement in (UNICEF-BG, 2018a).
- ✓ Despite the criminalization of domestic violence in 2018 in its various forms, including psychological harassment, much remains to be done to limit its spread. Programs for domestic violence prevention, including information campaigns, educational and training programs for professionals who are responsible to tackle the problem like policemen, judges, social and health workers, psychologists, media specialists and experts in the state administration are needed in order to develop pro-active strategies against violence toward women and children.
- ✓ Although some Bulgarian schools have student councils as a form of student self-government, the real student involvement in building a school community from the bottom up is still an upcoming cause in which not a few but a vast number of students will be included (Jelyazkova & Bancheva, 2018).

### *Research challenges*

- ✓ To provide a system of regularly collected evidence-based information to monitor and evaluate the efficacy of the implemented policy measures, programs and practices related to support for families and children.
- ✓ To study the diversity of family forms with its legal, socio-economic and psychosocial implications on the quality of life and children's wellbeing.
- ✓ To promote studies on the topics related to parents' active involvement and children's participation in decision-making processes and solving issues in the best interest of a child.
- ✓ To encourage studies on the topic of barriers and stereotypes against more active male involvement in childcare and professional care work.

### *(ii) What are the pressing gaps in provision?*

- ✓ Social services lack flexibility and sustainability, which can enable them to play a preventive and supportive role towards limiting the risk of child poverty and social inclusion.
- ✓ There is no system of universal services aimed at developing parenting knowledge and skills which are accessible to all families with young children (if interested), and not only to disadvantaged families.
- ✓ There are no systematic approaches to monitoring the needs of parents and their priority areas. Parents are not actively involved in monitoring quality and management of ECEC services and school management through participation in public councils and surveys (Todorova, 2019).
- ✓ Promoting a pro-active role of fathers in the raising of young children, through their inclusion in the work of ECEC services, public campaigns promoting shared parenting, and having more male practitioners in supporting and teaching professions.
- ✓ There is a need for mechanisms and procedures to be put in place in different sectors to take account of children's views during their contacts with institutions and professionals in their everyday life. Education and schools in particular already have built-in practices, and social services, albeit mostly as a result of NGOs' efforts, are also on the right track, but there is still a lot to be done in the areas of justice for children and healthcare (UNICEF, 2018).

- ✓ In spite of some government-funded policies, programs and pilot projects aimed at improving parenting skills and knowledge, support for parents is fragmented and is not considered as part of broader family and children's policies (World Bank, 2019). Additionally, the public debate is influenced by the resistance to parental policies and their effectiveness, expressed by part of the parental organizations.

### *The impact of COVID-19 on children and families*

The COVID-19 pandemic has become an enormous burden on parents and families especially during the first lockdown (13.03-13.05.2020) and the second one (27.11-21.12.2020) in the country. During the lockdowns, all ECEC institutions (crèches and kindergartens) as well as schools, child centres and sports facilities were closed. Teaching during the second term of school year 2019/2020 as well as during the second lockdown was done online, and other distant communication technologies.

A remote form of work for the employees has been introduced based on the Ordinance of the Minister of Health. Although this is not an obligatory measure and depends on the employer's assessment for such opportunities, the new regulation addresses the parents' needs for flexible management of work and family duties.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy developed a set of financial measures to support working parents. During the first lockdown a one-time allowance (means-tested to a ceiling of the minimum wage) was granted to parents who were in unpaid leave or who lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic and were not on unemployment benefits. Additionally, a one-time means-tested allowance was introduced exceptionally in 2020/2021 to support the beginning of the school year for children in 8<sup>th</sup> grade attending public schools. In the autumn of 2020, a monthly allowance for a child up to 14 years (means-tested to a ceiling of 150% of the minimum wage) is given to parents who do not work and do not receive an unemployment benefit<sup>7</sup>.

According to the National Network for Children' analysis of the latest announced by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy measures for family support (NNC, 2020b), there are still categories of needy families who are not covered by the support schemes. For instance, in case parents are not in unpaid leave and currently receive a reduced salary due to the inability of the business to pay a full salary or parents who are in home office with young children, esp.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/informatsiya-za-pomoshchta-za-semeystvata-chiito-detsa-uchat-ot-razstoyanie>

those in early school, preschool and kindergarten age, are virtually unable to fully perform their duties and take adequate care of their children without assistance.

An additional problem exists because unpaid leave is not guaranteed and must be explicitly authorized by the employer; many employers will be forced to lay off parents instead of allowing unpaid leave due to the need for active labour in sectors like small businesses, companies, shops, where the employers will prefer to hire another worker instead of keeping them on unpaid leave.

Self-employed persons, freelancers, artists, craftsmen and others like them, whose families and children since the beginning of the crisis are practically unable to fully practise their profession due to the imposed restrictions refer to a risk group of people and families who also need the state support.

There are a vast majority of children in need who remain outside the scope of state support because they do not meet administrative criteria. Supplies of food and medicine also do not reach children in areas where some of the needy unemployed parents are not registered as unemployed, do not have legal addresses, etc - circumstances that deprive them of social support.

In some areas there is limited access to health care, emergency care and prevention for children due to the overload of healthcare system, additional requirements for PCR tests for children, etc.

Children with special needs belong to the most affected vulnerable groups because of the lack of on-site training and care. Providing working services to this group is essential in terms of long run effects on the children's physical and psychosocial health.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak the NGO sector<sup>8</sup> has started to provide free consultancy and psychological help for parents and children through online activities like webinars, online teaching courses and materials, etc. The main topics include parents' anxiety and coping strategies, distant education and guidance to parents, effects of isolation on children, how to develop emotional intelligence of children during isolation, how to talk with children about

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<sup>8</sup> UNICEF-Bulgaria. (2020). *COVID-19: How UNICEF is Helping in Bulgaria*. <https://www.unicef.org/bulgaria/en/covid-19-how-unicef-helping-bulgaria>;  
Parents Association. (2020). *Are We Ready for the School Year? 12 Ideas for Parents in a COVID Crisis*. <https://roditeli.org/resources>; Parent Academy.(2020). *How to Support Children in Times of COVID and Isolation?* <https://parentacademy.bg/koronavirus-i-decata/>

COVID-19, how to control stress, how to effectively manage time, etc. The IRIS program<sup>9</sup> supports projects of civil society organizations, community centres, and initiative groups to help vulnerable children and their families affected by COVID-19.

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## 5 CROATIA - National report on family support policy & provision

**Andreja Brajša-Žganec, Ljiljana Kaliterna Lipovčan, Ninoslava Pečnik, Ivana Dobrotić**

### 5.1 Trends and issues related to demography

#### *(i) Fertility rates*

From 2010 to 2015, a decrease in the total fertility rate in Croatia can be observed, followed by a slight increase from 2016 to 2018 (Table 1).

Table 1. *Fertility rates*

Year	Fertility rate
2010	1.55
2015	1.40
2016	1.42
2017	1.42
2018	1.47
2019	N/A

*Note.* Eurostat Database (2020).

#### *(ii) Families with children by number of children*

The percentage of families with children in the 2010-2015 period did not change, with the majority of families composed of two adults with dependent children (Table 2).

Table 2

Year	One adult with dependent children	Two adults with dependent children	Three or more adults with dependent children
2010	1.8	21.3	13.0
2015	1.7	21.3	12.1

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

*(iii) Percentage of the population from 0 to 19*

There is a decrease in the proportion of the population aged 0-19 years in the 2015-2019 period in Croatia (Table 3).

Table 3. *Population 19 years and under*

Year	%
2010	21.1
2015	20.4
2016	20.2
2017	19.9
2018	19.1
2019	19.4

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

*(iv) Percentage of population over working (retiring) age*

There is an obvious increase in the proportion of the population aged 65 years and more in the 2015-2019 period in Croatia (Table 4).

Table 4. *Population over working age*

Year	%
2010	17.8
2015	18.8
2016	19.2
2017	19.6
2018	20.1
2019	20.6

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

*(v) Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities*

According to the 2011 Census data, people living in Croatia identified themselves as: Croats (90.4%), Serbs (4.4%), 4.4% of the population as some other ethnicity (including Bosniak, Hungarian, Slovene, Czech and Roma) and 0.8% were unspecified (Census 2011). Roma population is particularly vulnerable, having the most challenging social position characterised by a high degree of poverty and social exclusion (Šikić-Mićanović, 2017).

*(vi) Migration patterns*

It is important to notice that Croatia does not have a migration statistic of good quality (e.g. there is no population registers), and it is hard to assess the real extent of migrations. What is known, using as the proxy the international data (i.e. data from Germany, Ireland etc. where most Croatian citizens migrated recently), is that the real migrations since 2013 are much higher than those seen in the Croatian Bureau of Statistics data, which are also presented here. Official data rely on self-reporting of the migration to the state institutions, which many of the migrants have not completed.

It is estimated that in the 2013-2018 period, Croatia had a negative net migration of around 200.000 people, most of the people migrating towards Germany and Ireland. There are no data on the patterns of these migrations (e.g., how many people stayed or returned).

Official data for 2018 are presented here, but they are not very informative in terms of exact trends and migration patterns. In 2018, 39,515 people emigrated from Croatia while 26,029 immigrated to the country, which resulted in a negative net migration of -13,486. Most of the emigrants were between 20 and 39 years old, and most of them emigrated to Germany. Of those who immigrated to Croatia, about 33% were Croatian citizens, and 67% were foreign nationals. In addition, 40% of all immigrants came from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Men accounted for about three-quarters of immigrants and 55% of emigrants (figures released by the Croatian Bureau of Statistics CBS, 2019).

## **5.2 Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles and children's living arrangements.**

### *(i) Family household types*

In 2018, the largest average household size in EU-28 was recorded in Croatia (2.8 members; Eurostat, 2019). By household types, 33.8 % of households in Croatia were households with children (couples with children 19.4%, single adults with children 1.9% and other types of households with children 12.5%). Among households with children, the most common household type consisted of 'couple with children', accounting for 19.4 % of all private households. The most common household types in Croatia in 2018 were a single person living alone (22.9 %) and other types of households without children (25.1%; Eurostat, 2019).

### *(ii) Marriage and divorce rates*

Some 19,900 marriages and almost 6,000 divorces took place in Croatia in 2018. These figures may be expressed as 4.9 marriages for every 1,000 persons (crude marriage rate) and 1.5 divorces for every 1,000 persons (crude divorce rate). In relation to 2010 when there were 5.0 marriages for every 1,000 persons and 1.2 divorces for every 1,000 persons, the trend shows that the number of divorces increased, while the number of marriages stayed at almost the same level. The number of divorces per 100 marriages was 23.8 in 2010 and grew to 30.8 in 2018. The mean age at first marriage for women was 27.1 years in 2010, and increased to 28.3 years in 2018.

### *(iii) Lone-parent families*

There were 1.8% lone-parent families in 2010, 1.7% in 2015, and 1.9% in 2018 in Croatia (Eurostat, 2020). According to Census (2011), most of these families are with dependent children and are female-headed (84%).

*(iv) New family forms such as same-sex couple households*

Since December 2013, five months after the EU accession, there is a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage in Croatia. Croatia thus only recognises life partnerships for same-sex couples. The 2014 Life Partnership Act grants same-sex couples most of the marriage rights, except joint adoption. The Act also recognises and defines unregistered same-sex relationships in a similar way to informal life partners, thus making them equal to registered life partnerships after they have been cohabiting for a minimum of three years.

Croatia first recognised same-sex couples in 2003 through the 2003 Act on Non-registered Same-Sex Unions, which was later replaced by the Life Partnership Act. The 2003 act was only symbolic as it granted only the mutual assistance and support and the property rights that were virtually unimplementable due to the inability to register the union and the lack of harmonization with other legislation. Since July 15th, 2014, there have been 293 life partnerships registered in Croatia.

*(v) Family structures and changes across social groups*

The structure of families is changing over the years; however, a nuclear family, consisting of a couple and their child/children, is still predominant in the structure of Croatian families (54.3%), followed by couples without children (28.6%) and then single-parent families, which are predominantly female-headed (14.4%; CBS, 2016).

*(vi) Children and youth living in institutions*

According to data received from the Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy data, in December 2018 there were 1,638 children and youth living in institutions (in 2017 1,728; in 2016 1,432). Please note that 2017 and 2018 data also include the unaccompanied, foreign national children.

*(vii) Children in out-of-home care such as foster care*

According to the Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy's data, in December 2018 there were 2,276 children in foster care (in 2017 2,190; in 2016 2,342). In the last ten years, the number of children in foster care is growing, mostly due to a National Plan for Deinstitutionalization and Transformation of Social Welfare Homes which Croatia adopted in 2011 (OG, 2011). The framework for the implementation of the deinstitutionalization process

includes the provision of care for institutionalized children, and their transfer to a non-institutional environment such as foster care (Sovar, 2015).

*(viii) Home-based support*

The government offers a variety of financial assistance and child benefit programs to parents after the birth of a child. Here is a list of the biggest child benefits in Croatia: (1) tax relief, (2) child allowance (from Croatian Pension funds), (3) parental support benefits, (4) allowance for newborn baby costs (from Croatia Health Insurance funds), (5) family allowances from cities and municipalities, (6) counselling (for example pregnancy courses).

**5.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare.**

*(i) Poverty rates*

At risk of poverty rates (60% of median equivalised income after social transfers) were almost the same in the 2010-2018 period with about 20% of both total population and 18 years and younger being at risk of poverty (Table 5). However, in the same period there is a decrease in the population (total population and children) who suffer from severe material deprivation (Table 6).

Table 5. *At risk of poverty (%)*

Year	Total population	18 and younger
2010	20.6	19.6
2015	20.0	20.9
2016	19.5	20.4
2017	20.0	21.4
2018	19.3	19.7

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

Table 6. *Suffering from severe material deprivation (%)*

Year	Total population	18 and younger
2010	14.3	14.8
2015	13.7	13.4
2016	12.5	11.6
2017	10.3	8.8
2018	8.6	7.6

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

*(ii) Employment/unemployment rates*

In the 2010-2015 period, there was an increase in employment and a decrease in unemployment rates (Table 7).

Table 7. *Employment and unemployment rates*

Year	Employed %	Unemployed %
2010	57.4	11.8
2015	56.0	16.1
2016	56.9	13.4
2017	58.9	11.0
2018	60.6	8.4
2019	N/A	6.8

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

*(iii) Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage related to gender, age, ethnicity, migrant status and other social dimensions*

Unemployment rates in Croatia are characterised by the fact that the higher rates can be observed for young (up to 29 years) and older workers (50+) than for the core workforce. Gender differences in unemployment in the 2010-2018 period show: until 2015 they were on the rise, i.e., there were more unemployed women than men, but since 2015 the gender gap has been slowly narrowing (CES, 2020). This is a typical trend for the Croatian labour market, i.e., women's participation in the labour market is usually worsened in times of crisis. Moreover, there is horizontal and vertical segregation in the labour market.

The at-risk-of-poverty rate, by age and gender, was in 2019 (CBS, 2020) the highest for persons aged 65 years or over (30.1%) and was higher for women (33.6%) than men (24.9%). Within the category of households with dependent children, the highest at-risk-of-poverty rates in 2019 were recorded for households consisting of a single parent with dependent children (33.8%), and for households with two adults with three or more children (25.6%; CBS, 2020).

*(iv) Patterns of education disadvantage*

According to Dobrotić et al. (2018) study, between 2004 and 2016, the number of children included in early childhood education and care (ECEC) rose from 13.4% to 21.4% for nursery-aged children, and from 41.2% to 59.2% for kindergarten-aged children, with the growth being slower during the financial crisis (2010 – 2015). There are pronounced regional differences regarding the ECEC coverage rate in Croatia. In 2016, the coverage rate in counties ranged from 5.6% to 40.4% of children in nursery programmes, and from 24.4% to 82.8% of children in kindergarten programmes, depending on the county. The level achieved is still very far from meeting the Barcelona Objectives set by the European Union (33% of nursery-aged children and 90% of preschool-aged children included in ECEC services), or the objectives set within the Europe 2020 strategy (95% of children between the age of four and primary school age included in preschool programmes). Namely, there are only 59.6% of four-year-olds and 64% of five-year-olds in regular ECEC (Dobrotić et al., 2018). Many parents see preschool programs as barely or moderately affordable, which is one of the major difficulties they face regarding the participation of their children in nursery or kindergarten (Pećnik, 2013).

Extracurricular programs are also essential because the need for childcare continues when the child goes to elementary school, especially because the parents' working hours often do not coincide with school hours, leading to a risk of leaving children without adult supervision

too early. Such problems are particularly pronounced in single-parent families, which also have a smaller network of informal support. There are no indicators of the coverage of elementary school children with extended attendance programs, but the current research and experiences of larger cities, which have the higher financial capacity to support such programs, show that the existing capacities are insufficient (Dobrotić & Zrinščak, 2014).

*(v) Major social welfare trends such as disadvantage risks, welfare benefit receipt levels*

The Croatian welfare state does not fit any of the ideal-type welfare models and can be best described as a hybrid welfare regime. The first programmes (e.g., pensions) were built on Bismarckian principles of social insurance, while the socialist period brought universal access to some services (e.g., in education, healthcare). In the socialist period, a social infrastructure was also built (e.g., centres for social work, employment offices, elderly homes, kindergartens), and one-year employment-based maternity leave. Since 1990 the welfare state has been under constant pressure for reforms, with neoliberal elements becoming incorporated in various social policy systems, particularly in pensions, healthcare, and the social assistance system (Dobrotić, 2019). Namely, since the 1990s a wide range of social problems only aggravated in Croatia, putting high pressure for reforms in various social sectors (the transition from the socialist to capitalist system coincided with the 1991-1995 war). The state had a limited capacity to address all the demands, which brought about a highly divided social sphere. Only a few social groups were able to influence reforms, mostly pensioners and war veterans, while the needs of the most vulnerable groups (e.g., people at risk of poverty, persons with disabilities) remained neglected (Stubbs & Zrinščak, 2012; Dobrotić, 2019). The main social policy sectors, such as pensions and healthcare, were a subject of often reforms with a primary goal to contribute to their financial sustainability and 'rationalise' social expenditures. The social protection dimension of the welfare state somewhat weakened, and the activation dimension remained weak. Namely, following activation and demographic arguments, investments in the labour market and work-family policies have also become more evident in the last decade, however, looking from a comparative perspective, these segments of the welfare state have remained underdeveloped in Croatia (Dobrotić, 2019).

The social protection expenditure in Croatia falls far below the EU-28 average. It varied between 18.8% and 21.1% of GDP in the 2008–2015 period, placing Croatia among other post-socialist countries. The largest share of social expenditure is targeted at sickness/ healthcare/ disability and old age (Dobrotić, 2019), the two policy functions on which Croatia spends a higher share of the total social protection expenditure also in comparison with the EU-28 average. Croatia has comprehensive war veterans' programmes resulting in the fact that social expenditure for the disability function exceeds the EU-28 average (2.6% of GDP in HR in 2014,

2% in EU-28). Croatia is still spending less on the function of family/children in comparison with the EU-28 average, with a downward trend in relative spending (Dobrotić, 2019). The limited state capacity to address the problems of other social groups, such as the unemployed and persons at the risk of poverty is also clearly expressed in the share of the social protection expenditure dedicated to these functions (Dobrotić, 2019), which is much lower than the EU-28 average (5.8% for unemployment, 1.9% for social exclusion, and 2.0% for housing in 2010).

*(vi) Housing problems*

Housing cost overburden rates in the period 2010-2018 show the obvious trend of decreasing in total population, as well as in those 18 years and younger (Table 8). Overcrowding rates for the same period show decline, although these rates are quite high for Croatia in comparison to other EU countries (Table 9).

Table 8. *Housing cost overburden rate*

Year	Total population	18 and younger
2010	14.1	10.6
2015	7.2	5.4
2016	6.4	5.1
2017	5.8	4.9
2018	5.1	3.7

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

Table 9. *Overcrowding rate (OCR)*

Year	Total population
2010	43.7
2015	41.7

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2016	41.1
2017	39.9
2018	39.3

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Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

*Summary: The broader socio-economic context and trends which influences children's, parental and family circumstances and environments*

Although on a stable growth path in recent years, Croatia is still recovering from a deep and long-lasting recession that started a decade ago. It recorded negative economic growth for six consecutive years (2009-2014), with a cumulative drop in real GDP of 12 %. The recession especially affected public finances and the labour market. There has been a recovery from 2015–2018, with a cumulative growth of 11.5%.

#### **5.4 The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions, and actors which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision**

##### *(i) Relationship with European Union*

Croatia was granted the EU candidate status in 2004 and became the EU member on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013. There are 11 members of the European Parliament from Croatia, nine representatives in the European Economic and Social Committee, and eight representatives in the European Committee of the Regions.

##### *(ii) Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy*

The Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy performs administrative and other tasks related to monitoring and analysis of demographic trends in the Republic of Croatia; marriage and marital relations; parent-child relationships; protection of children whose parents live separately, protection of children without proper parental care, encouragement of responsible parenting, support and care of family members; encouraging the development of community work programs, the development and affirmation of volunteerism and the work of citizens' associations supporting parents, families, children, young people, people with disabilities and the elderly and all socially vulnerable groups of the population; encouraging and setting up counselling centres for children, young people, parents, persons with disabilities, the

elderly and victims of domestic violence, and carrying out professional and inspection supervision of their work. The Ministry performs administrative and professional tasks related to improving the quality of life of young people and building inter-ministerial youth policy, which includes proposing and implementing strategic documents, laws, acts, programs, and projects in the field of youth policy, and their monitoring and evaluation.

Social Welfare Centres refer to public institutions which provide services, professional assistance, and protects the rights and interests of socially vulnerable groups who cannot meet their needs due to unfavourable personal, family, economic, social and other circumstances. In order to prevent, mitigate and eliminate the causes and conditions of social vulnerabilities, support is provided to families, especially children and other persons who cannot take care of themselves. There are 81 social welfare centres and 37 branches in the territory of the Republic of Croatia.

The institution of the Ombudsman for Children was established in 2003 as the first specialised institution of its kind in the Republic of Croatia, with the aim of protecting and promoting the rights and interests of children. The Ombudsman for Children acts on the basis of complaints received, or on their own initiative, whether in responding to individual violations of children's rights and interests, or in general. The Ombudsperson for Children is appointed by the Croatian Parliament for a period of eight years, and acts independently and autonomously.

*(iii) Influential lobbying groups*

UNICEF Croatia is active in Croatia and is supporting various activities aimed at parents and children.

RODA – Roditelji u Akciji (Parents in Action) is one of the most known and active NGOs advocating for parent's and children's rights. There are also many NGOs that are more specified in terms of target groups (e.g., Dugine obitelji advocating for LGBT parents' rights, LET advocating for single parent families, ADOPTA advocating for adoptive parents' rights, etc.).

*(iv) Influential policy/research networks*

Croatian Science Foundation - funds research projects in the duration of four-five years.

Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy funds one-year projects to support family and children's rights (total funds for 2019 = 6 316 000.00 HRK).

There are also EU funds available for various activities.

*(v) The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support*

Croatia has a parliamentary, representative democratic system, with executive power sitting with the government that consists of different ministries. The most relevant for family policy and family support is the Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy which performs administrative and professional tasks related to the social welfare institutions, the care and protection of people and families, youth, persons with disabilities, victims of trafficking, refugees, asylum seekers and professional activities related to foster care and adoption. Child benefits are administered by the Pension Insurance Institute, and maternity benefits by the Health Insurance Institute, while other rights are administered by social welfare centres. Moreover, early childhood education and care is under the competency of the minister in charge of education. Although a small country of 4.12 million inhabitants (CBS, 2018), there are 555 local units (428 municipalities and 127 cities) and 20 counties, while Zagreb has both the status of city and county. They all can provide their own programs. The fact that the responsibility for different welfare programmes is divided between several sectors and levels of government is often criticised due to the fact that there is a lack of coordination and collaboration between them, which results in parallelism of social programmes and ad hoc policy solutions, bringing about an inefficient welfare state (See Dobrotić, 2019).

*(vi) The democratic system and main political parties; (unitary vs federal state structures; centralised vs decentralised structures)*

Croatia is a unitary democratic parliamentary republic. Croatia's five largest political parties are: Croatian Democratic Union– HDZ, Social Democratic Party of Croatia – SDP, Miroslav Škoro Homeland Movement – DPMŠ, Bridge of Independent Lists – MOST, We can!

*(vii) The institutional framework for government and state roles, and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular (e.g., Ministry roles, national vs local/regional government roles)*

The social welfare system in Croatia is composed of three main components: (1) Financial support, (2) Social welfare services, including counselling services, assistance for persons with mental or physical disability, counselling about family problems, care for children in case of separation or divorce, care for homeless children (including help in finding accommodation – foster care), and assistance for individuals and families faced with some specific difficulties, e.g. alcoholism, delinquency, etc., (3) Institutional care. The most important financial benefit is the children's allowance which is paid for children aged up to 15 or 19 years of age. The child allowance level depends on the earnings-test calculated at the household level. There is also a birth grant paid for each child at the state level, but also various 'local' birth grants, which may vary from symbolic amounts and up to 10,000 Euros per child in more developed areas in the case of, e.g., the third child in the family.

*(viii) The ways in and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policymaking and review*

Today, children are increasingly more actively involved in the development of public policies (two children were part of a working group for the development of the Strategy for Children), as well as in the work of public bodies which deal with issues that are important to them (in 2012, children were involved in the Children's Council as equal members). However, it must be said that at the moment there are no formal indicators of the way children participate in public bodies and policymaking, especially not from their own perspective (Jeđud Borić et al., 2017).

**5.5 List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year 2000. For each document indicate**

- National Strategy for Children's Rights in the Republic of Croatia 2014 – 2020. (NSCRRC, 2014)
- National Program for Youth 2014-2017. (NPY, 2014)
- National Strategy for Protection Against Violence in Families 2017- 2022. (NSPVF, 2017)
- National Program for Youth 2020-2024 is in the progress (NPY, 2020)

*(i) Whether participation of families and young people has been mentioned in the document*

- National Strategy for Children's Rights in the Republic of Croatia 2014 – 2020. Participation of children is mentioned in the document.
- National Strategy for Protection Against Violence in Families 2017- 2022. Participation of youth and/or families is mentioned in the document.
- National Program for Youth 2014-2017. Participation of youth (15-30 years) is mentioned in the document.
- National Program for Youth 2020-2024 (in progress). Participation of youth (15-30 years) is mentioned in the document.

*(ii) The extent to which such participation has been implemented*

Organised children's participation at the local level is achieved through the work of Children's Councils and Children's Forums. The Children's Councils arrange organised activities, children's participation, and the non-formal involvement of primary school children in the local community to encourage and develop collaboration as well as partnerships between children and local authorities. In 2011, there were 25 Children's Councils, while, according to the latest data, presently there are 29 active Children's Councils.

Another form of organised children's participation is through Children's Forums designed for younger children, aged 9 to 15 years, and their function is to familiarise children with children's rights and provide education on peace, mutual understanding, and cooperation. Currently, there are more than 70 Children's Forums in Croatia and more than 20,000 children have been included in this project over the last 20 years. In Croatia, the participation rights of children in the field of cultural rights and the right to leisure have been assessed as insufficient. According to the Ombudsperson for Children, obstacles to the realisation of these rights include a lack of awareness among adults about the importance of these rights, as well as inadequate investment in facilities and activities for children and youth. This is reflected in the lack of facilities and activities for play and leisure for children and youth as well as the insufficient number and poorly equipped playgrounds for children with developmental disabilities (Brajša-Žganec et al., 2014). The institutional form of youth participation at the local level is achieved through Youth Advisory Boards that involves youth participation in decision making processes that emphasises partnership between youth and "adult" decision-makers. In this sense, Youth Advisory Boards participate at the political, economic and social levels by assuming responsibility and developing practices and resources useful for young and "adults", i.e., decision-makers. Although local and regional governments are legally obligated to organise Youth Advisory Boards, legislation does not stipulate sanctions for non-implementation, and therefore numerous local and regional governments did not establish Youth Advisory Boards. In some cases, although boards have been established, they have limited accountability, capacity and efficiency.

For this reason, a new Youth Advisory Boards Act was drafted and adopted in 2014. In the process of drafting the Act, the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth held a public consultation with youth, the Croatian Youth Network, and other organisations in order to determine implementation problems inherent in the former Act and find solutions. The new Act stipulates that each town, municipality or county must have at least one person that will, as a part of their job description, ensure the implementation of the Youth Advisory Boards Act and the work of Youth Councils. The implementation of the new Act is supervised by the ministry responsible for youth by regular annual monitoring of the establishment of councils, their operation and collaboration with local and regional units. However, the new Act also does not specify binding mechanisms or sanctions for not establishing youth advisory boards within the stipulated time period. Data from 2013, based on a nationally representative sample of youth between 15 and 30 years of age, show that 12% of young people in Croatia are involved in youth clubs or some other type of youth organisations.

## 5.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services

### *(i) The priorities in child welfare and family policy*

In the recent period, the main priority has been put on parental leave benefits, with the aim to increase them, as these have been set at very low level. There were also some investments in ECEC in the last year; however, the provision level is still far beyond the EU average. These two policy measures have been put at the centre of government's goal of so-called „demographic renewal“, while other topics were more on the margin. For example, children's poverty that is a serious risk in Croatia has been absent from public agenda, and it would be sporadically raised mostly on the EU initiative, but not much would happen at the policy level. There is no one systematic and coherent policy towards families and children.

### *(ii) The main types of family provision and support and key features (e.g., different types of cash support (universal and targeted, work-family reconciliation measures and children's/family services, child care etc)*

Employed or self-employed women are entitled to maternity leave paid at the level of previous salary, starting between 28th and 45th day prior to the birth and lasting until the child is six months of age. (Self-)employed parents, i.e., mother and/or father are entitled to additional four months of parental leave and two months of the parental leave which are non-transferable from the one parent to the other (a so-called father's quota). Parental leave can be extended up to the child's third birthday in the case of multiple births or three or more children. Maternity and parental benefits are calculated based on the employee's average salary in the six months before the leave start; with the ceiling being set only at parental leave benefit. The parental leave benefit, although paid at the level of previous earnings is thus small due to a ceiling, and can lead to a significant drop in the family standard (Dobrotić and Zrinščak, 2014). Namely, for years the ceiling was set at 355 EUR per month, to be increased in 2017 to 530 EUR and in 2020 at 755 EUR per month, as a measure of demographic policy that aims to encourage 'demographic renewal and development of Croatia'. Unemployed and inactive parents (i.e., primarily mothers) are also entitled to maternity/parental leave benefit that amounted to 220 EUR per month to be increased to 310 EUR in 2018. The same benefit amount is provided to (self)employed parents who do not fulfil employment-related eligibility criteria, i.e., insurance period needed before the leave starts.

The most important financial support measures aimed at families with children are: child allowance, pronatality benefit, birth grant, and tax relief. The number of children users of child

allowance is decreasing, and in July 2020 there were 279,515 children's beneficiaries. The allowance level is small, i.e., the regular level varies between 26 and 40 euros per child per month, while there are some categories of children (e.g., children with disabilities, children of war veterans) who can receive a somewhat higher amount. Pronatal benefit, introduced in 2007, amounts to 65 EUR for a third child and 130 EUR for more than three children per month, but only for those families who are already entitled to child allowance for three or four children. Families also receive one-off birth grants (310 EUR). Different types and amounts of one-off birth grants or pronatal benefits are also paid by local government units, and depending on the local budgets and level of development they may vary from symbolic to more generous amounts (e.g., in the case of the third child they can amount up to 8-10,000 euros in few more developed cities).

*(iii) The types of funding involved such as state, charity vs private sector providers, and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners*

The state is funding fundamental social rights such as maternity and parental leaves, child allowances, social assistance, unemployment benefits and similar benefits, social welfare centres and their services, as well as services for children in need for social care. When it comes to ECEC, 99% of funds are coming from the local level, i.e. from towns and municipalities. Local government units can also provide their financial programs and services. Parenting support services are to some extent provided by social welfare centres (predominantly indicated parenting support), however, universal and targeted parenting support is provided mostly through NGO projects, and thus funded on a project basis, which puts their sustainability at high risk.

*(iv) Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations*

Croatia does not have a developed practice of policy monitoring and evaluation. Thus, reforms are often ad-hoc and ill-advised. Although there is a practice of strategic documents followed by concrete indicators, these are mostly not monitored, and programs are typically not evaluated. Still, in some cases, governments are open to scholars' advice and tend to ask them to provide a study in certain fields (e.g., parenting, ECEC). However, once more, this is not a systematic practice, and an evidence-based approach to policymaking is not present.

*(v) Limitations in national and official data and statistics*

While these days Croatia has much better data compared to a decade ago, many gaps remain. That particularly refers to family and parenting support, where many indicators are missing (or are not publicly available, and it takes a lot of struggle and personal contacts to get more precise

data). Thus, publicly accessible statistics on family benefits, family and parenting support programs is weak, if present.

### **5.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision. What are the prominent policy and practice developments related to family support services from children's rights, social equality, and evidence-informed perspectives?**

#### *(i) What are the pressing policy, practice and research challenges impeding developments?*

Looking from a comparative perspective, Croatia provides parents with rather generous maternity and parental leave. However, parental leave benefit is still low and can act as an incentive for parents (especially middle to higher earners) to return to the labour market earlier. The ECEC provision is insufficient and unaffordable for many parents, although there are some improvements in this area. Child benefits are low and means-tested (mostly families in poverty or at-risk-of-poverty are eligible). While there is a constant discussion about the need to make them a universal right and increase their value, that was not implemented until now. There is no paternity leave in Croatia (which is going to change with the new directive); however, there are two-months father's quotas within the parental leave system. With the increase in parental benefit over the last two years, the share of fathers using them has grown; however, it is still low due to traditional attitudes around parenting, which should be challenged more. Also, there is a need to improve access to these rights for parents in unstable and insecure employment, which is becoming more common.

When it comes to children in foster care and institution, there is an ongoing process of deinstitutionalisation (it has been on the agenda for already two to three decades); however, the progress is slow and adoptive parents are still faced with many obstacles.

Availability of parenting support programs and family support services in general, and evidence-based programmes in particular, is very limited. They are provided by family centres, some ECDE/kindergartens, and NGOs.

#### *(ii) What are the pressing gaps in provision?*

There is a lack of ECEC services, as well as out-of-school-hours services in Croatia, with this problem being more present in rural and less developed areas. In addition, there are no investments in free-time activities for children, while in rural and less developed areas, these are generally absent (i.e. even if parents can pay for them, there is no availability).

There is a lack of indicated, targeted, and universal parenting support services and programmes (Dobrotić et al., 2015). The existing programmes are more focused on early

childhood than on adolescence. There is a clear need for more support to parents and children after parental separation/divorce.

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## 6 THE CZECH REPUBLIC - National report on family support policy & provision

**Hana Hašková & Radka Dudová**

### 6.1 Trends and issues related to demography

#### *(i) Fertility rates*

Family behaviour underwent profound changes after 1989. The total fertility rate in the Czech Republic declined from 1.9 in 1990 to 1.13 in 1999. Since then, it has increased to 1.71, as of 2018 (Eurostat Database, 2020). Over the same time, the age at which women give birth to their first child, increased from 22 to 28 years, the strong link between marriage and fertility disappeared, and unmarried cohabitation became common. While among women born at the beginning of 20th century the overall rate of lifetime childlessness was 20% and it was concentrated mostly among women with higher education, under state socialism (1948-1989) lifetime childlessness decreased to 5–6% of women born in the 1950s, and subsequently increased to slightly above 10% of women born in the 1970s (Zeman, 2018).

Table 1. *Total fertility rates*

Year	Total fertility rates
2010	1.51
2015	1.57
2016	1.63
2017	1.69
2018	1.71

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

#### *(ii) Families with children by number of children*

According to the Czech Statistical Office, in 2017, out of two-parent nuclear families with dependent children, 41% had one child, 47% had two children, and 11% had more than two children. Out of solo-parent nuclear families, 62% had one child, and 38% had more than one child (mostly 2) (Czech Statistical Office, 2019a).

According to Census data from 2011, there were 1.4 million dependent children in two-parent families in the Czech Republic, and there were on average 1.6 dependent children per two-parent family. Most solo-parent families consisted of mothers with children (81 %), and there were 400 thousand dependent children in solo-parent families, i.e., 22 % out of all dependent children (Czech Statistical Office, 2013a).

*(iii) Percentage of the population from 0 to 19*

Until the beginning of the 1990s, the percentage of the population aged 0-18 years was about 30% in the Czech Republic. Due to fertility decline in the 1990s, the percentage decreased by ten percentage points till 2008, and then stagnated at about 20% (Table 2).

Table 2. *Population 19 years and under*

Year	%
2010	20.1
2015	19.6
2016	19.7
2017	19.9
2018	20.1
2019	20.3

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

*(iv) Percentage of population over working (retiring) age*

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the percentage of the population aged 65 years and more increased by seven percentage points. Old dependency ratio rapidly increases (Czech Statistical Office, 2020a).

Table 3. *Population 65 years and over*

Year	%
2010	15.3
2015	17.8
2016	18.3
2017	18.8
2018	19.2
2019	19.6

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

*(v) Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities*

Cultural/social/ethnic diversity among families exists in the country. Mainly Roma (usually larger) families and solo-parent families are included among vulnerable families in the Czech Republic as per social policy literature. Low-income families are targets of specific social support measures. Roma families and solo-parent families are more often than other types of families among low-income families.

Roma children are at a higher risk of not attending kindergartens. They were also at a higher risk of being placed into segregated special education stream that was created to provide education to those children believed to be unable to attend mainstream schools due to their physical, sensory or mental disabilities (European Roma Rights Centre, 2017). The Ministry of Education estimated that for academic year 2016/2017, Roma children accounted for 3.7% of all pupils at all elementary schools while they made up 30.9% of all children being taught according to curricula for children with mild mental disabilities (Ministry of Education, Youth and

Sports, 2016). Special policy measures and programs are being implemented recently (such as compulsory preschool education one year before school attendance and inclusive education) to tackle the discriminatory practices (European Roma Rights Centre, 2017).

Roma children are also at a higher risk of living out of their families. According to European Roma Rights Centre (2013), Romani children account for around 3% of all children under the age of three but between 27 and 32% of institutionalised children aged three and under are Roma and share is even bigger in case of older children. Although the Constitutional Court rejected poverty as a reason to put a child in state care, poverty-related factors were most frequently reported as the reason for removing a child from their family in the case of Roma (European Roma Rights Centre, 2013). Roma children living out of their families also have a lower chance to be in foster care (European Roma Rights Centre, 2013). However, statistical data concerning the Roma population is not systematically collected (European Roma Rights Centre, 2020).

In autumn 2020, the European Committee of Social Rights has found the Czech Republic responsible for large-scale and discriminatory institutionalisation of children with disabilities and Romani children in early childhood care institutions. The Committee criticised the failure of the country to adopt and implement an appropriate deinstitutionalisation strategy (European Roma Rights Centre, 2020).

#### *(vi) Migration patterns*

Immigration to the Czech Republic increases. Based on Eurostat data, in 2013, there were 30,124 immigrants to the country while in 2018, there were 65,910 immigrants. Out of 65,910 immigrants, only 5,844 (i.e., almost 9 %) were minors under the age of 15. Only a minority of immigrants are from countries other than EU, EFTA, and candidate countries with a low Human Development Index: in 2018 it was 1,292 (i.e., less than 2%). Out of these, 1,292 immigrants, only 22 (1.7%) were minors under the age of 15 (Eurostat Database, 2020).

Foreigners living in the Czech Republic are mostly from Ukraine and Slovakia, followed by foreigners from Vietnam, Russia, Poland, and Germany. Based on data from the Czech Statistical Office, shares of minors under the age of 15 and those aged 65 and older among foreigners are slowly increasing. In 2018, there were about 5.3 % of foreigners among all people living in the Czech Republic (Czech Statistical Office, 2019b).

The number of people living in the Czech Republic is growing because of much higher immigration compared to emigration. In 2018, there were almost 40 thousand more immigrants compared to emigrants (Eurostat Database, 2020).

## 6.2 Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles and children's living arrangements

### (i) Family household types

According to the OECD Family Database (2020), in 2018, 85.9% of children aged 0-17 lived in two-parent families (66.5 with married parents and 19.4% with cohabiting parents), 13.6% of children aged 0-17 lived in solo-parent families, and 0.4 of children aged 0-17 lived in other arrangements (i.e., no adult person was considered a parent in the child's household) in the Czech Republic. This database does not differentiate between biological, step and adoptive parents.

According to the Eurostat Database (2020), in 2015, majority of the population lived in three types of households in the Czech Republic: households composed of two adults, households composed of one adult and households composed of two adults with dependent children (Table 4).

#### *Structure of household population by household type in 2015*

Type of household	Percentage of total population
Household composed of one adult	29.0
Household composed of one adult with dependent children	4.0
Household composed of two adults	30.6
Household composed of two adults with dependent children	23.2
Household composed of three or more adults	8.6
Household composed of three or more adults with dependent children	4.6

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

According to Czech Statistical Office, in 2017, out of all households in the Czech Republic, there were 35% two-parent nuclear families; 9.4% two-parent families with other

relatives; 16.8% solo-parent nuclear families; 3.2% other solo-parent families; 1.7% non-family households and 339% households of individuals. Out of two-parent nuclear families with dependent children, 41% had one child, 47% had two children, and 11% had more than two children. Out of lone-parent nuclear families, 62% had one child, and 38% had more than one child, mostly 2 (Czech Statistical Office, 2019a).

*(ii) Marriage and divorce rates*

Marriage stopped being an almost universal life transition among Czechs who came into adult age after 1989. Moreover, the age at first marriage increased from 22 to 29 years among women (and similarly among men). The strong link between marriage and fertility disappeared, and unmarried cohabitation became common, even with children.

Table 5. *Crude marriage rates*

Year	Crude marriage rates
1990	8.8
2000	5.4
2010	4.5
2015	4.6
2016	4.8
2017	5.0
2018	5.1

*Note.* Eurostat Database (2020).

Table 6. *Total first marriage rates (women)*

Year	Total first marriage rates
1990	1.00
2000	0.50
2010	0.46
2015	0.54
2016	0.58
2017	0.60
2018	0.63

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

Table 7. *Mean age at first marriage (women)*

Year	Mean age
1990	21.6
2000	24.6
2010	27.9
2015	28.8
2016	29.0
2017	29.1
2018	29.2

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

Table 8. *Crude divorce rates*

Year	Crude divorce rates
1990	3.1
2000	2.9
2010	2.9
2015	2.5
2016	2.4
2017	2.4
2018	2.3

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

Table 9. *Divorces per 100 marriages*

Year	Divorces per 100 marriages
1990	35.2
2000	53.7
2010	65.9
2015	54.1
2016	49.2
2017	49.0

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

### *(iii) Lone-parent families*

According to the Czech Statistical Office, in 2017, out of solo-parent nuclear families, 62% had one child, and 38% had more than one child (mostly two). Out of heads of solo-parent nuclear families (primarily women), 31% were single, 56% divorced, and 13% widowed. In terms of their education, 42.5% completed secondary education with a final exam, 20% had higher education, and 37.5% had lower education. Most of them were employees, but 10.5% were self-employed and 14.4% unemployed. Compared to parents in two-parent families, solo parents are more often unemployed, have a lower level of education, and more often an only child. Moreover, lone-parent families have a significantly lower yearly income than two-parent families; thus, they hit the poverty line more often compared to two-parent families (Czech Statistical Office, 2019a).

Compared to mothers in two-parent families, solo-mothers are more often employed in precarious forms of employment, they are also less often economically inactive (at home) but more often unemployed. Every third employed solo parent has at least two jobs because income from one job would not be enough to support their family. Another third of employed solo parents would be happy to accept a second job. A third of solo parents are not able to cover their children's needs, especially when it comes to free time activities, clothing, and shoes (Paloncyová et al. 2019a).

Often, non-resident parents (mostly fathers) do not pay child maintenance to their children regularly. Most of the children from solo-parent families live with their mothers; only one in ten of such children live with their fathers, and the same percentage of such children live partly with their mother and partly with their father. Every fourth of such children do not see the other parent at all. Every fifth of such children do not receive child maintenance at all (Paloncyová et al. 2019a).

The Czech government has recently discussed a law that should help low-income solo parents through the state paying the child maintenance in cases where the responsible parent fails to pay it. The state should also take the burden of filing court cases with the parents who fail to pay the child maintenance.

### *(iv) New family forms such as same-sex couple households*

LGBT families in the Czech Republic do not have equal standing with those of a man and a woman. Discrimination against them can be found in existing laws. First, same-sex couples cannot marry and attain the rights and obligations related to marriage. Secondly, particular

entitlements are legally granted to parental couples consisting of a mother and a father. Same-sex couples are not entitled to unpaid leave to attend childbirth. They do not have equal rights to paid leave to care for a sick child. They are disadvantaged in their entitlements to maternity and parental leave benefits. When the biological parent dies, the court has to decide on child custody. This practice deprives the other parent and the child in such families of the certainty of staying together. When a same-sex couple separates, the biological parent's partner does not have to pay child support and is no longer entitled to participate in raising the child. Gender-neutral marriage and allowing one's partner to adopt the other partner's child (stepchild adoption) in gay and lesbian families would solve many of these problems. This has been on the Czech LGBT movement's agenda since 2008. In 2006 same-sex civil unions were legalized but stepchild adoption was prohibited to ensure the law would be passed. Gay men and lesbians were allowed to apply for adoption of a child individually, but only if they were not in a civil union. In 2016, the Constitutional Court repealed the provision prohibiting adoption by a person in a civil union. However, adoption as a couple, fostering a child as a couple, and stepchild adoption have never been possible outside of marriage in Czechia. A legislative proposal on gender-neutral marriage that includes complete parental rights was first discussed in Czech Parliament only in 2018. The various parental exclusions, and the very fact that a new legal institution (a civil union) was created for same-sex couples, instead of opening marriage to them, points to the general societal organizing principle – heteronormativity (Hašková & Sloboda, 2018).

According to the 2011 census, only 925 children in Czechia lived in households led by same-sex couples, and only 46 of them lived with adults in civil unions (Czech Statistical Office, 2013b). This may indicate a low symbolic value of civil unions, especially for same-sex partners that intend to become parents. This applies mainly to lesbian couples as the chances of becoming parents are lower among male couples. Concerning the number of children present in households of gay men and lesbian women, the real figure expects to be higher because the census figures do not include single and divorced parents not living in the child's household, and those who did not identify their household as run by a couple (Sloboda, 2016). Based on data from the Ministry of Interior, there were 2710 same-sex civil unions in the Czech Republic, and another 915 same-sex civil unions dissolved till 31.12.2019 (Sloboda & Vohlídalová, 2020).

*(v) Family structures and changes across social groups*

According to OECD Family Database (2020), in 2018, 66.5% of children aged 0-17 lived with two married parents, 19.4% of children lived with two unmarried parents, 13.6% of children with a solo parent, 0.4% of children in other arrangements (i.e., no adult person was considered a parent in the child's household). This database does not differentiate between biological, step and adoptive parents.

The number of children in a family decreases from a long-term perspective. Roma families are traditionally larger. Highly-educated women have a higher chance of having only one child or staying childless. Women with the lowest level of education have a higher chance of having more children or staying lifelong childless (Hašková, Dudová & Pospíšilová, 2019).

There are no representative data on reconstituted families in Czechia. According to a sample survey of RILSA, the stepparents in reconstituted families are usually men. The partners in reconstituted families are mostly unmarried. Two-fifths of surveyed reconstituted families had two children; one child was usually from a previous partnership of one of the partners (more often the mother), and both of the partners were biological parents to the other child. Every fifth surveyed reconstituted family reported to have children not living in the surveyed household, i.e., these children live elsewhere, e.g., with their other parent. Two-thirds of the surveyed reconstituted families had a total of two or more children (Palonciová et al., 2019b).

*(vi) Children and youth living in institutions*

The number of children living in institutions is slowly decreasing while the number of children in out-of-home care, such as foster care is gradually increasing. In 2012, 10,382 children were living in institutions while in 2018, 7,246 children were living in institutions (Virtuální knihovna NRP, undated).

Repeatedly, the Czech Republic has been criticized for the high number of children (and especially small children) living in institutions. Recently, the Council of Europe's Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) has criticised the Czech Republic for its "discriminatory and extensive" placement of children living with disabilities and Romani children into residential nursery institutions or centres designed for very young children. Czechia is one of the last countries in Europe where it is possible to place children under the age of three in such facilities. The Committee's decision is based on several arguments: the Committee found the Czech Republic has failed in its attempts to significantly reduce the number of young children living in institutions and to arrange care for them on a community and/or family basis. The Committee also stated that the existing Czech legal code that is facilitating the placement of vulnerable young children in institutions, as well as the constant maintenance of residential children's centres according to the law on healthcare services, is violating Article 17 of the European Social Charter. The Committee further found that the Czech Government has not yet undertaken any significant, targeted steps toward providing care to children in community/family settings instead of institutions. Lastly, the Committee has emphasised that the Czech Government was unable to provide any evidence that it has attempted to improve collecting relevant data necessary to formulating appropriate policies and adopting corresponding policy steps (Czech Press Agency, 2020).

*(vii) Children in out-of-home care such as foster care*

The number of children living in institutions is slowly decreasing while the number of children in out of home care, such as foster care is gradually increasing. In 2012, 15,527 children were living in out-of-home care such as foster care, and in 2018, 19,626 children were living in out-of-home care such as foster care (Virtuální knihovna NRP, undated).

*(viii) Home-based support*

Home-based support to families in which children are at risk of being placed in out-of-home care and support to foster families is insufficient in Czechia. The number of children taken out of home care has been slowly declining in recent years, but many children are placed in institutions instead of foster care (Kuchařová et al., 2017). It is necessary to strengthen preventive services and work with the family so that it can cope with the difficulties, and the children do not have to leave it.

Statistics on the number and reasons for children taken out of home care are systematically collected since 2016 only. Since 2011, poverty and bad housing conditions must not be the main reason for placing a child out of home care, and the child's opinion must be considered.

Although the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs planned to strengthen prevention programs and transfer part of the money allocated to institutions to support families in which children are at risk of being placed in out-of-home care, this plan failed. Its condition was the placement of the agenda of care for vulnerable children under one Ministry, which failed, and the agenda is still shared by three Ministries: the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs; the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports; and the Ministry of Healthcare.

In the online register of social services (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2020), there are 2,661 providers of field and ambulant services for families with children and young adults up to 26 years of age (out of them 1,864 provide services for children only). Such services include low-threshold facilities for children and young people; crisis assistance; social activation services for families with children; relief services; professional social counselling; social rehabilitation; field programs and shelters (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2020). Despite the existence of these services, support for families at risk is insufficient. The Czech Republic has been repeatedly criticised for the inadequate and frequent removal of children from their families, and insufficient prevention and support for families at risk, which would allow these children to remain in the family.

### **6.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare**

(i) *Poverty rates*

Based on Eurostat statistics (Eurostat Database, 2020), the at-risk-of-poverty rate (cut-off point: 60% of median equalised income after social transfers) is not high in the Czech Republic compared to the average in the EU countries. It was 9.6 % compared to 17.1 % in EU-28 in average in 2019. The share of young people under the age of 18 at risk of poverty or social exclusion was 13.2 % compared to 24.3 % in the EU-28 in average in 2019 (Eurostat Database, 2020). However, many people and families live just above the cut-off point. Severe material deprivation rate was decreasing in the country to 2.8% (compared to 5.9% in the EU-28 in average), and to 3.4% among people younger than 18 (compared to 6.6% in the EU-28 in average) according to the Eurostat statistics too (Eurostat Database, 2020), but certain population groups are at risk of poverty more than others, especially solo-parent families, and families with more children (more often Roma than majority families).

(ii) *Employment/unemployment rates*

Gender difference in the employment rate among the population aged 15-64 is one of the highest in the Czech Republic (14.1 percentage points) in the EU comparison. The number is higher only in Malta, Greece, Italy, and Romania (OECD Family Database, 2020). It is due to mothers' comparatively long withdrawal from the labour market when having preschool children.

While among Czech two-parent families with children aged 0-14 both parents were employed in 54% of them, 6% practised one-and-half model of employment, in 36 % only one parent was employed and in 3% none of the parents were employed; in the EU on average both parents were employed in 47% of them, 14% practices one-and-half model of employment, in 28% only one parent was employed, in 6% none of the parents was employed, and 5% practices some other model of employment in 2014 (OECD Family Database, 2020). Among solo-parent families, slightly more than a third of solo parents were jobless in the Czech Republic as well as in the EU on average. However, three times more solo parents in the EU on average compared to Czech solo parents worked part-time. Part-time employment, in general, is less common in post-socialist European countries than elsewhere in Europe (OECD Family Database, 2020).

Table 10. *Unemployed as a percentage of active population*

Year	%
2010	7.3

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2015	5.1
2016	4.0
2017	2.9
2018	2.2
2019	2.0

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Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

Table 11. *Employed among people aged 15-64*

Year	%
2010	65.0
2015	70.2
2016	72.0
2017	73.6
2018	74.8

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Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

*(iii) Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage related to gender, age, ethnicity, migrant status, and other social dimensions*

There is one of the largest gender pay gaps in the Czech Republic according to EU comparison. There is also one of the biggest gender differences in the employment rate in the country due to mothers' long-term interruption of their gainful employment following motherhood. Motherhood (being a woman and having small children), low education (without a secondary school leaving exam), and being recognized as Roma and experiencing health-related disadvantages increase the risk of unemployment. Risk of unemployment is higher also among

young people, people in pre-retirement age and specific regions (Hašková, Křížková & Pospíšilová, 2018).

*(iv) Patterns of education disadvantage*

UNICEF (2018) Innocenti Research Centre study provided an overview of the differences in the education of children in 41 developed countries, including the Czech Republic (data from 2015). It states that life in an advanced country does not guarantee equal access to quality education. Concerning preschool education in the Czech Republic, 88.6% of children attended preschool education facilities one year before compulsory school attendance, which placed the country 38th out of all 41 nations; only Romania, the US, and Turkey were behind (UNICEF, 2018). Since then, one year of preschool education became compulsory in the country. However, the Czech Republic remains the second European country (after Slovakia), where the least number of children under three years old attend preschool (OECD Family Database, 2020).

With regards to primary education, the differences between the best and worst pupils are vast in the studied 41 developed countries. Still, the Czech Republic scored best in a comparison of the performance gap in reading achievement in grade four (85% of pupils of the fourth grade achieved good reading and comprehension scores) (UNICEF, 2018). The Czech Republic ranked in the bottom third of the countries surveyed for secondary education though, with 78% of the children at the age of 15 found to be at a basic level. Overall, the ranking of the Czech Republic in primary education scores well (10th place out of 29), but in the quality of its secondary education it moves to the 38th place among developed countries (UNICEF, 2018).

According to the results of the UNICEF (2018) study, there are also great differences in the quality of schools in the Czech Republic (the Czech Republic ranked 29th out of 37). Roma children still progress worse than the majority of children, and chances of children with mental, physical and senses disadvantages/differences to reach high education remain limited (European Roma Rights Centre 2017; 2020). Social inclusion in schooling policy was introduced recently to tackle these inequalities.

*(v) Major social welfare trends such as disadvantage risks, welfare benefit receipt levels*

Wages are the most important component of family household income. The importance of tax relieves and credits in family policy has increased, while benefits targeting low-income families has decreased and become targeted to the lowest-income families only in the last decade. 93% of families with children count on the Children Tax Credit. In contrast, since 2007, the share of families receiving some of the social benefits for families has been decreasing (Kuchařová et al., 2017; 2020).

Unemployment rates have been rather low in Czechia compared to other European countries, but unemployment repeatedly increased in times of crises and recessions (Eurostat Database, 2020). Income poverty of families with children in the Czech Republic is also low in comparison to other European countries (Eurostat Database, 2020). Still, there are several types of families that experience poverty and are at risk of poverty more often than others. When using the material deprivation indicator and the subjective indicator of the overall satisfaction with income, the Czech Republic in European comparison occupies about the tenth position and is close to the EU average (Kuchařová et al. 2015; Večerník & Mysíková 2015). Disposable income per person decreases with the number of children in the family. Moreover, families headed by solo parents have lower disposable income per person compared to two-parent families. Solo-parent families with children and families with three or more children are at significantly higher risk of income poverty than other families with children. In 2019, the income poverty rate of these families was 30.8%, resp. 17.6% (Czech Statistical Office, 2020b).

Social benefits for solo parents no longer exist in the family support system in the Czech Republic. Moreover, the fact that Czechia belongs among countries with the biggest gender pay gap in Europe and unemployment is higher among women than men contribute to financial problems in solo parent families headed by mothers (Hašková, Dudová & Křížková, 2015).

The disposable income of families with a preschool child is several percentage points higher compared to families with older children, although in 2007-2009 the families with older schoolchildren had the highest income among families with children. This "exchange" attributes to a greater focus of state cash support on families with preschool children (especially but not only the increase of parental allowance) while targeted benefits to low-income families with children were reduced (Kuchařová et al., 2020).

Employment significantly reduces the risk of income poverty (Večerník & Mysíková 2015). The largest share of people at risk of poverty lives in households with at least one unemployed member (52.7% in 2019, Czech Statistical Office, 2020b).

Social benefits for families are taken more often by multi-child families, families of solo parents, families without employed parents, families where neither parent has a high school diploma and families with low income from employment (Kuchařová et al., 2020).

Major financial difficulties are expressed mainly by solo parents (81% state some difficulties, 23% major difficulties), parents of three and more children (74% state some difficulties, 16% major difficulties) and parents with the youngest child of school age (70% state some difficulties, 10% major difficulties). In families with both parents, 63% report some difficulties, but only 7% report major difficulties (Kuchařová et al., 2017).

The share of households whose income after deducting housing costs is lower than the value of their subsistence level and thus not sufficient to provide for the basic necessities of life has increased from 3.0% to 4.4% since 2009. These households need on average 69% of their net income to pay for housing costs. Half of these households have major difficulties to live with such small income (Czech Statistical Office, 2016). We find a higher concentration of these households among households with four or more children, in solo-parent families, in households of the unemployed and with low education of their members (Sirovátka et al., 2015).

Housing costs are a large or certain burden for most families with children. On the contrary, the costs of education account for the smallest share of all expenditures - the highest are associated with preschool education. Spending on children's leisure activities is one of the least affordable items, though (Kuchařová et al., 2017).

Disregarding insurance-based leave benefits, the most important social benefits (not insurance-based) that help families financially are parental allowance, child benefit, housing allowance, and assistance in material need. More than a third of families with children take some of these four benefits. Significantly higher shares can be found among families with three or more children, in families with the lowest incomes, in families without economically active parents, in families at risk of income poverty, in families at risk of losing their homes and in families with the low educational level of parents (Kuchařová et al. 2017). We also find a higher share in families with the youngest child under the school age, but here the main reason is that a large part of these families receive an income-untested parental allowance, which is provided to one of the parents (usually only the mother but the parents are allowed but not motivated to take turns) to provide childcare (generally up to three to four years; the parent is allowed to be in employment while receiving parental allowance but they are permitted to use childcare facilities for only 92 hours a month till the child is two years old).

Back in 2007, the most frequently received social benefit for families with children were the child benefits. Two-thirds of families with children received them, and this proportion increased with the number of children in the family. Since 2008, some families lost entitlement to child benefits due to a change in a law. The share of families receiving child benefits fell to 18% in 2014. The coverage of poor families by child benefits decreased significantly. At present, child benefits are mainly used by families with at least three children. They are also more often taken by solo-parents and low-income families (Kuchařová et al., 2017).

The housing allowance is intended for low-income households, regardless of whether they have children so that their housing costs (under certain conditions) amount to a maximum of 30% (35% in Prague) of household income. Among families, single parents with children (22%), families with three or more children (19%), families with the lowest incomes (39%) and

families at risk of income poverty (38%) most often receive housing allowance (Kuchařová et al., 2017).

Assistance in material need accompany the payment of housing allowance for many families, which is why they are also used more frequently in the types of families mentioned above. In total, 4% of families with children receive them, 2% of childless households (Kuchařová et al., 2017). Throughout the last decades, the number of bank loans and loans to households grew, rising more than ten times between 2000 and 2015. More than 70% of these are loans for housing financing; another roughly 18% are for consumption (Chlad, 2016). Approximately 40% of Czech households have a loan, half of which is a mortgage. The accumulation of loans may be threatening the economic stability of the household, especially in times of crisis and recession when unemployment rises. Loans are repaid by half of the families with one child, three-fifths of families with two children, and almost two-thirds of families with three or more children. Solo parents have a loan in a third of cases; families with both parents almost twice as often. Families with two parents and 1-2 children more often pay only loans for financing housing, while families with three and more children and solo-parent families repay loans for other purposes to a greater extent (Kuchařová et al., 2017).

#### *(vi) Housing problems*

Czech Republic is among the European countries with the least affordable own housing (Deloitte, 2020). Housing problems are among the reasons young people declare to contribute to delaying their entry into parenthood (Kuchařová et al., 2017). Law on social housing has been discussed and prepared in the last years. Government Strategy on Social Housing 2015-2025 states among the major problems: a) high burden of some households on housing expenditure; b) insufficient evaluation of the effectiveness of housing policy instruments; c) inefficiency and fragmentation of public transfers; d) insufficient definition of obligations of individual actors in the field of social housing; e) lack of affordable housing; f) growing social and spatial segregation; g) high housing costs; h) discrimination against certain groups in access to decent housing; i) a growing number of homeless people or people at risk of losing their homes; j) residential segregation, expansion of socially excluded localities; k) indebtedness in some groups; l) there is a lack of systematic monitoring of data on social exclusion from housing and homelessness; m) inadequacy of social services helping homeless people; and n) partial, uncoordinated approaches to social housing (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2015).

According to the latest Report on the Family written by RILSA for the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (Kuchařová et al. 2017) a third of households with dependent children are overcrowded (48% among households of solo parents). Moreover, 150,000 children live in bad quality housing. Families paying more than 40% of their income on housing are considered at

risk of a loss of housing. Solo parent families, solo living women and the unemployed have higher chance to be at risk of a loss of housing (Kuchařová et al. 2017).

According to the same Report, compared to the EU average, Czech families live in flats more often than in family houses. The share of owner-occupied housing in the Czech Republic is above average in the European comparison, which, however, does not mean having a higher standard of housing, as these are often older houses without standard equipment. In the Czech Republic, there is also one of the smallest average apartment sizes in Europe by floor area and at the same time, the second-largest share of housing expenditure in the total final consumption of households. Below-standard housing and the degree of risk of loss of housing are indicated by three basic indicators: overcrowding of the apartment, insufficient quality of the apartment, and the financial demands of housing. The number of children reduces spatial comfort more than other factors but does not have a similar effect on other qualitative characteristics, nor on the degree of deprivation in housing. Below-standard housing and the degree of risk of loss of housing are higher among single-parent families, families with an unemployed member and income-poor. These groups of people experience the largest share of housing expenditure in their total consumption (Kuchařová et al., 2017).

In socially excluded localities, there is a particularly critical quality of housing at high housing costs, overcrowding, living without housing contracts and insufficient legal protection of tenants. In particular, there are households with at least one long-term unemployed and households of low-skilled workers (Kuchařová et al., 2017). The inhabitants of socially excluded localities are predominantly Roma that have small chance to leave such localities because of stigmatization due to their ethnicity as well as the place of living (Zpráva, 2016). Šimíková et al. (2015) concluded that the prevention of housing loss was weak at the national level. At the local level it was implemented with various intensities, unsystematically and inconsistently.

*Summary: The broader socio-economic context and trends which influences children's, parental and family circumstances and environments*

Since 2006, the senior component of the population in Czechia exceeds the children component (Eurostat Database, 2020). The Czech economy was growing since the 21st century except for the global economic crisis and the recession, and the recent COVID 19 pandemic. While household income increased, the volume of loans and thus the risk of indebtedness did too (Kuchařová et al., 2017), which may lead to dangerous long-term debts as a consequence of the pandemic. The problem remains the high cost of housing, low availability and quality of rental housing and the situation of families in socially excluded localities. Income poverty remains low in Czechia (Eurostat Database, 2020), but the effectiveness of social transfers in

reducing poverty of families with children is low, and the targeting of social benefits is declining (Kuchařová et al., 2017).

In contrast, the importance of tax relieves and credits in family policy is high. Worse income and the material situation are more common in families with a higher number of children, with non-working and/or low educated parents and with solo parents. In terms of age, poverty increases among children aged 12-18 (Kuchařová et al., 2017). Czech family policy implements gender-conservative familialism; it includes, for example, a Tax Relief for a Married Spouse, i.e. lower taxation of the income of the main income provider in a household who has a low-income married (or registered in case of same-sex couples) partner (mostly a wife), that, together with the gender-conservative parental allowance setting and one of the lowest access to childcare places for children under the age of three in Europe, makes it difficult for fathers to participate in childcare and for mothers to maintain paid work when having small children.

#### **6.4 The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions and actors' which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision**

##### *(i) Membership to the EU*

Yes. Since 2004.

##### *(ii) Relationship with European Union*

The Czech Republic became a Member State of the EU in 2004. It planned to adopt the euro as its official currency in 2010. However, the target date was postponed indefinitely. According to the Eurobarometer surveys, Czechs are one of the most Eurosceptic EU populations. There were several declines in their satisfaction with the EU when specific issues were dominantly discussed, such as the so-called "migration crisis" (Chlebounová, 2018). There are several right-wing and left-wing Eurosceptic political parties in the country. People with low education and older people incline to Euroscepticism more than others do (Tuček, 2021). Czechs like EU related opportunities to travel, live and study abroad, the EU funds, and the feeling of belonging to the "west". They criticize EU-related bureaucracy and the reduction in national sovereignty (Chlebounová, 2018).

##### *(iii) Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy*

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) is responsible for family policy, people with disabilities, social services and benefits, pensions, sickness insurance, employment, equal opportunities, the European Social Fund, and other issues. It provides methodological guidance for Labour Offices and inspectorates, Czech Social Security Administration, and the Office for

International Legal Protection of Children. It runs five Social Care Homes for children and adults with disabilities, and supervises the Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs.

MoLSA controls daycare (children's groups), foster care, and some types of institutional care for children. The Ministry of Education controls kindergartens, schools, and some other types of institutional care for children. Institutional care for children younger than three is controlled by the Ministry of Healthcare. Such fragmentation makes significant policy changes in this area complicated.

*(iv) Influential lobbying groups*

There are non-governmental organisations (NGOs) focusing on families, specific types of families, and family-related issues in the country. They have to compete for funds to be able to provide services for families, which may result in a discontinuity in these services. Some are invited to comment on family policy programs and measures and to participate in governmental advisory bodies. Grassroots activities were also initiated in the country. The Czech Women's Lobby was active in lobbying for expanding early childhood education and care facilities for children under three, but another group of citizens was able to produce an influential petition against the right of children to have a kindergarten place from the age of two. Czechia still belongs to the EU countries with the lowest access to childcare facilities for such small children. Národní centrum pro rodinu (National Family Centre) – closely related to the Catholic Church and promoting families of heterosexual couples with children – has been successful in lobbying, which is paradoxical given low Church affiliation of Czechs.

*(v) Influential policy/research networks*

There are several research institutes whose members have lately participated in the expert advisory bodies to the government or the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs on family policy, e.g., RISLA – Research Institute of Social and Labour Affairs, G&S IS CAS - Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Department of Gender & Sociology, and IDEA - Institute for Democracy & Economic Analysis. However, academics from other institutes (e.g. Faculty of Social Studies at Masaryk University; the Department of Public and Social Policy at the Institute of Sociological Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University; Department of Demography and Geodemography at the Faculty of Science of Charles University and others) have also participated in such expert advisory bodies to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, as for e.g. the currently working Scientific Council of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs or the Committee for Family Policy of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic. The later worked between 2015 and 2017 to help the Ministry in

designing its so far latest Strategy of Family Policy (Aktualizovaná, 2019), accepted in 2017 and revised in 2019.

*(vi) The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support*

Czechia is a parliamentary republic with a prime minister and a president. The country was formed in 1993, after Czechoslovakia was split into Czechia and Slovakia. The country is divided into 14 regions, including Prague. It has mostly a coalition government. Significant changes in family policies, as well as other policies, always have to be negotiated between several governmental parties, and governments having a shorter term have not been an exception. Several laws concerning availability of childcare facilities have been accepted and declined several times recently. The president, for example, disagreed with the law on Children's groups, and civil society petitioners disagreed with the right of children to have a place in a kindergarten and succeeded in amending a School Law before the right was to be implemented by the Law.

*(vii) The democratic system and main political parties; (unitary vs federal state structures; centralised vs decentralised structures)*

For long, the largest parties were the centre-left Czech Social Democratic Party and right-wing Civic Democratic Party in the Czech Republic. Since 2014, the rise of a new catch-all populist party ANO led to the weakening of traditional parties. Recently, in 2020, a leader of ANO is the prime minister, and ANO has 78 out of 200 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. Minister of labour and social affairs is a social democrat, but Social Democrats are weak with only 15 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. Recently, in 2020, the coalition government consists of ANO (a centre-right populist political movement) and the centre-left Czech Social Democratic Party. They govern with external support from the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM). The government is centralised. Regional governments are founders of part of schools, kindergartens and social services and create regional family policy programs.

*(viii) The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular*

Family policy is controlled by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, but related topics are controlled by other ministries, such as the Ministry of Healthcare, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs methodically controls the regional offices of the Authority for Social and Legal Protection of Children. Regional offices of the Authority for Social and Legal Protection of Children are relatively independent though. Regional governments are founders of family counselling offices and create their own family policies that influence financing and provision of services for families in the regions.

(ix) *The ways in and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policymaking and reviews*

Parents, children and young people are usually not directly involved in policymaking and reviews. Invited researchers, experts from practice as well as non-governmental organisations participate in governmental advisory bodies, such as e.g., Government Council for Human Rights that monitors the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Between 2015 and 2017, an expert Committee for Family Policy at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs was established in order to help the Ministry in designing the latest Strategy of Family Policy (accepted in 2017 but then revised in 2019). The Committee was made of economists, sociologists, demographers, and psychologists mainly. Recently, academics are involved in the Scientific Council of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. RISLA – Research Institute of Social and Labour Affairs organise surveys and analyse data on the topics the Ministry is interested.

## **6.5 The latest strategic documents and whether participation of families and young people has been mentioned in them**

(i) *Strategic documents on family policy*

- 2004: National Report on Family: summarises the expert knowledge and data on the situation of families in the Czech Republic; prepared by the Research Institute of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The participation of families or young people was not mentioned explicitly in the document.
- 2005: National Strategy of Family Policy: The text consists of a general part, expressing its basic orientation, a special part, containing a set of inspirations, orientations and recommendations, and an implementation part, containing specific goals, defining specific responsibilities and deadlines for implementation of individual measures in the time horizon to its next update. It was drafted by a group of experts and stakeholders, among which the representatives of the National Family Centre, representing conservative (Catholic) families. Their participation was not mentioned explicitly in the document. The participation of families or young people was not mentioned explicitly in the document.
- 2006: National Action Plan for Support of Families with Children 2006-2009: The action plan specified the goals, tasks and responsibilities stemming from the National Strategy of Family Policy. In order to meet the objectives of the action plan, four working groups were established within the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, corresponding to the key areas of support for families with children. Members of the working groups were

experts from the Ministries of Finance, Education, Youth and Sports, and Health Care, as well as representatives of the academic sphere; the non-governmental, non-profit sector; local government representatives, and other civil society actors involved and interested in supporting families with children. Most of the goals have not been implemented. The participation of families or young people was not mentioned explicitly in the document.

- 2008: Family Package; National Strategy of Support for Families with Children: presents seven measures of state support to families with children, such as the paternal leave or the new institutes of childcare provision (nannies, micro-kindergartens). The author was the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs; only a small part of the measures have been implemented. The participation of families or young people was not mentioned explicitly in the document.
- 2010: Summary Report on Implementation of the National Strategy of Support for Families with Children was prepared by the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs; it stated that the measures proposed in the National Strategy had been prepared in the form of a law proposal, but this law was not accepted by the government because of the high costs of the measures and economic recession. The participation of families or young people was not mentioned explicitly in the document.
- 2017: Strategy of Family Policy: The text consists of a statement of general aims, an analysis of the situation of families, international comparison, and the presentation of families' needs and the measures to fulfil them, defining who is responsible for their implementation. It was prepared by an expert commission at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The group of experts consisted mainly of academics and representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, but also included representatives of organizations representing and providing support to families, such as National Family Centre (representing conservative catholic families), and Alternativa 50+ (focusing on the elderly). They were acknowledged in the document as members of the expert commission. Some of the measures have been implemented already during the preparation of the Strategy, some were accepted later, some have not been implemented yet. The participation of families or young people was not mentioned explicitly in the document.
- 2017: The Report on the Family: summarises the expert knowledge and data on the situation of families in the Czech Republic; prepared by the Research Institute of the

Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The participation of families or young people was not mentioned explicitly in the document.

- 2019: Strategy of Family Policy: The version updated and revised by the MoLSA. The participation of families or young people was not mentioned explicitly in the document.
- 2020: The Report on Family: An update of the previous report. The participation of families or young people was not mentioned explicitly in the document.

*(ii) Strategic documents regarding children and young people*

- 2002: Action Plan "A World Suitable for Children", prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The participation of families or young people was not mentioned explicitly in the document.
- 2007: Action Plan "The World Suitable for Children" +5, prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The participation of families or young people was not mentioned explicitly in the document.
- 2008: National Action Plan of the Transformation and Unification of the System of Care for Vulnerable Children, prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The participation of families or young people was not mentioned explicitly in the document.
- 2012: National Strategy to Protect Children Rights (The Right to a Childhood): The national Strategy was based on the rights of the child, and defined the basic principles of the protection of children's rights and the care of children at risk. It contained specific intentions, goals, and activities, including a schedule, determination of the responsibility of individual ministries and the method of monitoring and evaluation. In the implementation of individual tasks, intensive cooperation of key ministries was expected, as well as close cooperation with local and regional governments and with civil society. The participation of families or young people was not mentioned explicitly in the document.
- Action Plan for Implementation of National Strategy of Protection of Children Rights until 2018: The main objectives included increasing the general awareness of children's rights among adults as well as children; creation of opportunities for children and young people to participate in the decisions on matters that concern and influence them; ensuring equal opportunities for children and young people from disadvantaged social environments; ensuring equal opportunities for children and young people with disabilities; promoting positive parenthood; deinstitutionalization of care for vulnerable children etc.

- 2008: National Strategy of the Prevention of Violence on Children 2008- 2018: The aim of the Strategy was to increase the protection of children at all national, regional, and local levels from all forms of violence to which states have committed themselves by ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 19). The lack of protection of children from violence has inspired the UN, in cooperation with the WHO, to draw up a World Report on Violence against Children ("the World Report"). The results of the World Report included recommendations for the development of national strategies for the prevention of violence against children, the implementation of which should respect the fulfilment of children's interests. The participation of children in this National Strategy had a form of a survey, conducted in the spring of 2008 by the 3rd Faculty of Medicine of Charles University at two primary schools, where children were asked about violence and opinions regarding the draft Strategy. Almost all children supported the implementation of the Strategy. They were also willing to participate in it themselves actively.
- 2003; 2007: Strategy of State Policy for Children and Youth 2003-2007; 2007-2013: The content of the Strategy was based on the proposals of the interested state administration bodies of the Czech Republic. Furthermore, the results of research and documents of the Institute of Children and Youth of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, data from the Czech Statistical Office and from non-governmental, non-profit organizations were used in preparing the proposal. The Chamber of Youth, an inter-ministerial advisory body for the coordination of youth at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, established a working group that worked on the material with the participation of representatives of the Ministry of Education, MLSA, and other ministries. The material was further discussed with representatives of the umbrella organizations of children and youth - the Czech Council of Children and Youth, the Circle of Children and Youth Associations and the Youth Council of the Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions. The Strategy followed the priorities and main ideas of the European Commission's White Paper on Youth, which was adopted in November 2001, and developed them into the conditions of the Czech Republic.
- 2013: Strategy of Support of Youth 2013-2020: The Strategy is the result of two years of work by experts in thematic working groups and extensive consultations in the form of round tables and a national conference on youth (November 2013), including active dialogue with young people within the Czech Council for Children and Youth project, "Let's do it" (Kecejme do toho). Important sources for the creation of the document were also the National Report on Youth (2013) and the conclusions from the meeting of the Youth Chamber, an advisory body of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in the field of youth.

- 2006: National Plan to Combat Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (2006-2008), prepared by the Ministry of Interior. The participation of families or young people was not mentioned explicitly in the document.
- 2014: Strategy of Education Policy of the CR until 2020: It was a key document and at the same time a condition for drawing funds from the European Union. The document contained three key priorities. The first was to reduce inequalities in education. The second was the support of quality teacher education, which was related to the completion and implementation of the career system or the strengthening of quality teaching of future teachers at universities. The third priority was responsible and effective management of the education system. It was prepared by experts in the area of education. It stated that all relevant actors (those who are in education, their parents, teachers and school management, founders, representatives of the public, non-profit, and business sectors) and the public were allowed to participate in formulating of the document with their suggestions and comments.
- National Action Plan for Inclusive Education (2010-2013, 2014-2015, 2016-2018, 2018-2020): The proposals were prepared by the Professional Platform for Common Education, which operates within the project Support for Common Education in Pedagogical Practice. The platform brings together experts from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and its directly managed organizations, representatives of the Association of Regions, Schools and Pedagogical Associations, pedagogical faculties and non-profit organizations dealing with the issue of education. In addition to prioritizing topics and individual areas, the document also provides recommendations for specific steps for the implementation of inclusive education as one of the priorities of the state educational policy of the Czech Republic. The participation of families or young people was not mentioned explicitly in the document.

*(iii) Strategic documents on fighting poverty and social exclusion*

- National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (2004-2006; 2008-2010): The document was based on the Joint Memorandum on Social Inclusion in the Czech Republic (2004), a joint document of the Czech government and the European Commission approved in December 2003. According to this memorandum, the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion was intended to become a means of translating the common European objectives of combating poverty and social exclusion into national policies and programs. The objectives were rather vague, and the responsibilities were not defined; therefore,

the implementation could not be monitored. The participation of families or young people was not mentioned explicitly in the document.

- Strategy of Fight against Social Exclusion 2011-2015; Strategy of Fight against Social Exclusion 2016-2020: The document was drafted by working groups composed of representatives of ministries, municipalities, and the expert public. The document focuses on addressing the existence and prevention of socially excluded localities, including the introduction of a system of regular monitoring of the phenomenon of social exclusion. The socially excluded localities are inhabited mainly by Roma population. The participation of families or young people was not mentioned explicitly in the document.
- 2013: Strategy of Social Inclusion 2014-2020: Prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The Strategy set out the priority topics of the Czech Republic in areas important for social inclusion for the coming period until 2020 and was also an important document in terms of the use of European Structural and Investment Funds. It contained an overview of measures affecting social inclusion and the fight against poverty, and an overview of relevant materials and resources. Social work was emphasized as a basic tool for the social inclusion of people who were socially excluded or at risk of social exclusion. All areas supporting social inclusion were therefore also considered in the Strategy in terms of how social work can contribute to the functioning of measures in individual areas. The participation of families or young people was not mentioned explicitly in the document.
- 2014: Strategy of Social Housing in the Czech Republic 2015-2020: coordinated by the Ministry of Labour and Social affairs who named four working groups and one coordinating group of experts. According to the document, working groups were composed of experts and of representatives of relevant ministries and Government Office, Labour Office, representatives of municipalities and regions, trade unions, representatives of the Public Defender of Rights, representatives of the civil sector - NGOs, platforms (e.g. Social Housing Platform, The Association of Entrepreneurs in the Construction Industry in the Czech Republic, representatives of tenants and landlords, the Council of Seniors of the Czech Republic, the Association of Civic Counselling Centres, etc.) and the academic sphere, so that the Strategy reflects a wide range of opinions. Families were thus only indirectly represented by the relevant NGOs.
- 2000, 2005, 2009: Strategy of Roma Integration and 2015: Strategy of Roma Integration 2020: The aim of the Strategy was to reverse the negative trends in the development of the situation of the Roma in the Czech Republic by 2020, especially in education,

employment, housing, and the social sphere. Relevant actors were involved in the preparation of the text, in particular members of the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs (civic society representatives, representatives of public administration and other represented institutions), representatives of the professional and civic public. An online public consultation and several round tables took place, with the aim to obtain the opinion of the professional and general public and Roma representatives on the individual objectives and their potential form.

- 2020: Strategy of social inclusion 2021–2030: Prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Its approval was one of the conditions for drawing funds from the EU for the programming period 2021+ in the social field. It focuses on the development of social work and deals with ten main topics, such as access to and retention of employment, social services, family support, and support for national minorities, especially the Roma. The social inclusion strategy will now be developed into concrete steps through action plans, always for a three-year cycle. The participation of families or young people was not mentioned explicitly in the document.

*(iv) Strategic documents regarding social services*

- 2015: National Strategy of the Development of Social Services 2016-2020: The Strategy was created by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, with the participation of representatives of government parties, representatives from ministries, trade unions, professional organizations, but it also states that it sought to reflect the results of the surveys among the users of social services or informal caregivers.

*(v) Strategic documents regarding gender equality*

- 2014: Governmental Strategy of Equality of Men and Women in the Czech Republic 2014-2020. The objectives include the reconciliation of work, private and family life; the increase in the men's participation in care, fight against domestic violence, and gender stereotypes. The feminist and gender NGOs participated in the formulation of the document.

*(vi) The extent to which participation of families and young people has been implemented*

In strategic documents concerning family policy, the participation of families and/or young people was indirect, via non-governmental organisations representing their interests. Especially the conservative organisation National Family Centre, with links to the Catholic Church, has participated and lobbied during the preparation of the critical documents concerning family policy, and had their representative in several expert commissions who were drafting the

strategic documents. In the Czech Republic, there are no trade unions of families or any such organisations whose participation would be mandatory. In case of the strategic documents concerning children and especially those concerning young people, children, and young people were asked to participate or to give their opinion in some form. Their input was implemented in the documents then; especially in case of the 2013 Strategy of Support of Youth (2013-2020) and the 2007 Strategy of State Policy for Children and Youth.

*(vii) The priorities in child welfare and family policy*

The main goals of family policy in Czechia as stated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs are to: create the social climate favourable to families; ensure appropriate socio-economic conditions that support the good functioning of families with children (including the work-life balance); pay special attention to families with special needs (solo-parent families, families with a member with a disability, families with more children and low-income families); strengthen the importance of family values (including marriage and mutual care), and to increase the birth rate and marriage rate in the population. The main objectives of child welfare policy in Czechia, as defined by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, are: to create opportunities for children and young people to participate in the decisions on matters that concern them; to ensure equal opportunities for children and young people from disadvantaged social environments; to ensure equal opportunities for children and young people with disabilities; to promote positive parenthood; and the deinstitutionalisation of care for vulnerable children.

## **6.6 The main types of family provision and support and key features**

*(i) Cash support*

Child Benefit: means-tested – for families who earn less than 2.7x household living minimum; depends on the age and the number of children; low monthly amount – about 20 Euros per month per child.

Birth Grant: one-time cash support paid upon the birth of a child (also for foster and adopted children younger one year), means-tested – for parents who live in a household with incomes lower than 2.7x living minimum; only for the first and second child, amount of 13,000 CZK (480 EUR) and 10,000 CZK (3,270 EUR), respectively.

Parental Allowance: universal, for parents of children under four years of age. A grant of 300,000 CZK (11,200 EUR) divided into monthly payments; parents can choose the monthly amount and draw the allowance up to the child's first - fourth birthday (till the total amount is paid off). It serves as the "replacement" of the parent's (usually mother's) income who stays

home to care for the child but can be combined with paid work and use of childcare services (limited for children younger than two years).

Housing Allowance: covers a significant part of housing costs, means-tested – for households whose housing costs are higher than a third of their incomes (with a maximum threshold).

Assistance in Material Need: composed of several allowances (Living Allowance, Housing Complement and Emergency Immediate Assistance), means-tested – for people whose means are below the living minimum; the amount is determined individually.

#### *Cash support to families providing long-term care*

Care (Disability) Allowance: universal, for people in need of care; depends on the level of care needs (four categories of dependency); the amount from 30 EUR to 740 EUR; higher (of 74 EUR) when the person in need of care is a child under 18, and the family's means are lower than twice the living minimum.

Contribution to buy a special aid (including a car): includes any specific aid that helps with mobility or another kind of impairment, there are thresholds introduced that depend on the type of assistance and the means of the household.

#### *Cash support to foster families*

Contribution to the covering of the needs of the child in foster care: 4,950 – 7,260 CZK monthly (183 – 269 EUR), paid until the child turns 18, or 26 when the child is studying.

The reward of the foster parent: 12,000 CZK (440 EUR) per month when caring for one child, 18,000 CZK (660 EUR) when caring for two children, 30,000 CZK (1,110 EUR) when caring for three children; the reward is in the form of salary and is taxed.

Professional (time-limited) foster care: the foster parent is an employee of the state and receives a salary (30,000 CZK brutto) regardless of whether they currently provide care; each child should stay a maximum of one year in professional foster care.

Contribution for the taking-up of a child to foster care: depends on age, 8,000-10,000 CZK (290 – 370 EUR), one time per child when the foster care starts.

Contribution towards the end of the foster care: for the person who was in foster care, 25,000 CZK (930 EUR), one time per person.

Contribution to buy a car: for parents who care for at least three foster children; up to 70% of the price of the car with a threshold 100,000 CZK (3,700 EUR).

*(ii) Leaves, time off from employment and working hours modifications*

Maternity leave: 28 weeks (from which 6-8 weeks must be drawn before the birth of the child), covered by the public sickness-insurance, the entitlement is based on the previous employment and the income level – allowance of 70 % of the previous salary with a threshold. Six weeks after the birth are reserved for the mother; the rest can be taken by the father if not taken by the mother.

Parental leave: up to the three years of age of the child; can be covered by the Parental Allowance, both parents can take the leave simultaneously (but there is only one Parental Allowance for the family).

Paternity leave (Fathers Post-Natal-Care Benefit): Seven days, compensated at the level of sick pay (60% of the income from employment with a threshold).

Short-term care leave: up to eight days, covered by an allowance at the level of sick pay (60% of the income from employment, with a threshold).

Long-term care leave: up to six months, in case of long-term care need of a family member, funded at the level of sick pay (60% of the income from employment with a threshold); caregivers can switch during this period.

*Time off from employment*

For escorting a family member to a health service facility for a check or treatment in case of sudden sickness or accident, as well as for a prescheduled check, treatment or inpatient treatment; time off including wage compensation shall be provided for the necessarily required period, up to one day at maximum, and covered by sickness insurance.

For escorting a child with a disability to social services centre, school, or education facility and back; up to six working days in a calendar year at maximum.

For accompanying a child to a school counselling facility in order to ascertain the child's special education needs is only provided to one of the family members for the essentially necessary period, but without any salary or wage compensation.

*Working hours modifications*

An employer is required to consider when scheduling male/female employees to shifts, the needs of female/male employees who care for children.

If a female employee/male employee caring for a child aged below 15, or a pregnant woman asks for reduced working hours or another suitable arrangement of the statutory working

week, the employer is required to allow their request, unless prohibited from that by serious operational reasons. The wage to which female/male employees are entitled based on the reduced working hours shall be proportionate to such reduced working hours (short-time work).

An employer is prohibited from scheduling pregnant women for any overtime work. Employees caring for a child aged below one year must not be ordered to work overtime by the employer.

### *(iii) Tax measures*

**Children Tax Credit:** Tax advantages for dependent children living with a taxpayer in a common household in the form of tax credit, applicable for parents who have at least six times the minimum income; the amount depends on the number of children (the amount per child increases with each additional child), from 15,204 CZK (564 EUR) to 24,204 CZK (900 EUR) per child per year.

**The tax relief for a married spouse:** A tax deduction can be claimed for a married spouse living with the taxpayer in a shared household whose income does not exceed CZK 68,000 in a calendar year. This tax relief amounts to CZK 24,840 (970 EUR) annually.

**Childcare Tax Credit:** A tax credit paid to those with taxable incomes who had to cover the costs of a childcare service of institution; up to 13,350 CZK (490 EUR) per year.

### *(iv) Services*

#### *Childcare services*

**Micro-nurseries:** a pilot programme of the MoLSA financed by the EU Structural Funds; offer childcare for children six months – four years old; small groups; very limited capacity, different providers who must fill the conditions defined by the MoLSA; free of charge; the goal is to help parents reconcile work and family.

**Children Groups:** offer care to children from one to four years of age, groups up to 24 children, different providers who must fill the conditions defined by the MoLSA, financed by the EU Structural Funds (until 2022; afterwards, state funding has been promised), parents participate in the financing, monthly costs about 2,500-5,000 CZK (93-185 EUR), however when state funding is in place, parental participation is likely to increase, limited capacity, the goal is to help parents reconcile work and family.

**Private childcare institutions:** not regulated much, parents pay the full costs – 10,000 – 20,000 CZK per month for full-time attendance.

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### *Kindergartens and schools (controlled by the Ministry of Education)*

Kindergartens: for children aged 2-6 (children are mostly not placed into kindergartens until the age of three or four due to limited capacities, history of seeing kindergartens as facilities for children from the age of three, the length of parental leave and the School law that gives preference to placement children from the age of three); the place is fully guaranteed only for the last year before school; kindergartens have to follow educational goals; open in general from 7:30 - 16-17; established mostly by municipalities, parents participate in the funding, but the price is low.

Schools: for children from the age of six, starting from the 1st of September; generally open at 8:00, closed during summer holidays (July and August).

After-school clubs: located within the schools, offer care and activities for school children up to the age of 10-12, close at 16-17 h, parents participate in the funding, but the price is relatively low; insufficient capacity for all children, so often only those who are nine or younger can be admitted.

### *Social services and counselling*

Social services: include social counselling, care, and prevention services; under the responsibility of MoLSA; targeting mainly people (families) in the difficult economic situation and people (families) who need long-term care because of a mental or physical disadvantage; some free of charge, but mostly financial participation of the client is required (in case of a mental or physical disadvantage, the participation is partly covered by the care allowance).

Social counselling: gives people the necessary information, mediates the follow-up services, and offers various possibilities for how to solve the client's problems. Usually, social counselling is a part of all kinds of social services or is provided as an independent service. It is always provided free of charge. Social counselling includes couple and family counselling.

### *Services for families who need long-term care*

Early intervention centres: Are oriented towards entire families with a young child whose development is at risk because of a disability or illness. The service includes the use of educational, social and health care measures. The objective is to return or maintain the parents' competence to raise the child and create suitable conditions for the child's development. The services are provided in the household and specialised daycare institutions, usually free of charge.

**Domiciliary care:** Provides assistance in the care of one's own person, organising meals, and assistance in running a household to people with a limited ability in the area of personal and home care. It is provided in the household, and the user participates in the funding of the service.

**Day-care centres and week care centres:** Are intended for people whose capabilities are limited, particularly in the areas of personal care and household care, and who cannot live at home on a daily basis without someone else's assistance. Providing temporary housing may be part of the service. The user participates in the funding of the service.

**Respite care:** This concerns, in particular, assistance for families that take all year-long care of a disabled person or senior. The provider supplies services to the individual at times when the family members are at work, on holiday, do common errands outside the home, etc. The care is provided in the household or in specialised residential institutions (day-care or short-term stays of up to three months). The user participates in the funding of the service.

**Protected and supported housing:** Is intended for people whose capabilities are limited, particularly in the areas of personal care and household care, and who want to live independently in the standard environment. Providing housing in an apartment that represents home for the user is managed by the provider and is part of a standard housing complex, which is a part of the service. The user participates in the funding of the service.

#### *Services for families in crises and low-income families*

**Shelter services:** Are intended for homeless people who are interested in acquiring their own housing. The basis of the service is to provide temporary accommodation together with the suggestion and realisation of methods to obtain housing and improve living conditions. The services are provided in specialised asylum institutions. The user usually participates in the funding of the service. The capacity is insufficient; there are waiting lists.

**Half-way houses:** Half-way houses offer temporary residence services for persons up to 26 years of age, who leave educational facilities for institutional or protection care after reaching their adulthood. In some cases, they also provide services for persons from other institutional facilities for children and youth care. The services provided include the following: accommodation, mediation of contact with the social environment, therapeutical activities, and assistance in advocacy of rights and interests. The services are charged.

**Outreach programmes:** These are programmes for minority groups and people at the risk of poverty (social exclusion). They are intended for people who abuse addictive substances, live in undignified or risky situations, live in an environment that is affected by socially

pathological phenomena and are directly at risk from such phenomena. The objective is to provide better orientation in the social environment and create conditions for solving their problems. The service is provided free of charge in places where people in such situations are found most frequently.

Low-threshold services for children and minors: The service is intended for children and minors facing the risk of social exclusion, in particular, "street kids". Most often, this is a street job. The social worker support is directed towards offering a meaningful way of spending free time and assistance in the neglected family or those with personal problems. The low-threshold character of the service is understood to mean the opportunity to use the service without the necessity to fulfil conditions, such as presenting proof of identity, complying with a regular schedule or obligation to participate in the activities on offer. The service is provided free of charge.

Emergency assistance (including crisis beds): This is an urgent kind of assistance for people who fail to cope alone with a bad experience or situation in life in the time period necessary. The assistance in crisis is a short-term service provided non-stop that includes a crisis bed within reach. It is usually provided free of charge.

#### *Services for foster families*

Accompanying organisations: Organisations that provide support to foster families, prepare them and follow them in their functioning and activities.

#### *(v) The types of funding involved such as state, charity vs private sector providers and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners*

Most of the funding is provided by the state. Charities and private sector play only a marginal role in the funding of family support. The cash transfers to families are funded by the national budget and by social and sickness insurance (that is obligatory for all those who are employed). The services are provided by municipalities, the state, and a number of non-governmental, non-profit organisations (NGOs) and individuals. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs perform a subsidy provision aiming to contribute towards the operation and development of social services provided by NGOs and other actors. The subsidy provisions are offered annually and must be competed for. A range of services is funded through the European Social Fund, mediated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Their funding is not secured in the long term.

#### *(vi) Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations*

The strategic policy documents are developed into the Action Plans for specific time periods, in which the goals, tasks and responsibilities are defined. The fulfilling of the Action Plans is monitored and evaluated periodically. However, the objectives are often vague (e.g. “increasing awareness” or “preparing conditions”) and the responsibilities are not defined clearly; therefore the implementation cannot be adequately monitored. In other cases, the implementation is dependent of the will of the government (that may change during the considered time period) and the limited financial resources (especially in 2010-2013 due to the crisis 2008-2010 and the following budget cuts). This means that the legislation implementing the policy goals may be prepared by the responsible actor, but the law is subsequently not accepted by the government. The monitoring may then state that the task was completed because the law was prepared as required by the strategy, but the measures have not been implemented.

*(vii) Limitations in national and official data and statistics*

The data concerning children, children welfare and rights are scattered. For example, there are no valid aggregate data on violence against children in the Czech Republic. Pilot studies provide inaccurate and often misleading data. There is some data collection within the Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Health, Czech School Inspectorate, and the Institute for Information in Education. The data concerning families are collected by the Czech Statistical Office and the RILSA - the research institute of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The data are based mainly on sample surveys. The data from the Czech Administration of Social Security are not available for analysis due to ineffective IT system of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which is the result of past unfavourable contracts with suppliers.

## **6.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision**

*(i) What are the pressing policy, practice and research challenges impeding developments?*

The effectiveness of social transfers in the elimination of poverty in families with children is relatively low in Czechia, ranging from 27% in solo-parent families to 63.7% in two-parents families with one child. In contrast, the average effectiveness of social transfers in the elimination of poverty, in general, is 74% and in the group of retirees even more than 90% (Kuchařová et al., 2017).

The employment rates of mothers with small children are very low. The unstable position of mothers with preschool children on the labour market and their higher risk of unemployment are related to the lack of childcare services and the lack of effective work-life balance policies. Czechs have limited opportunities to use part-time work; thus, mothers choose between full-

time employment and personal full-time care for a child as part of parental leave while a majority of fathers do not use their right to parental leave (Hašková et al., 2018).

Compared to other EU countries, in the Czech Republic, still many children live in institutional care facilities. Since 2006, several government strategies have been adopted to transform the care system for children at risk. Despite these efforts, the system still fails to work well. One of its characteristic features is the high number of children taken from their parents' care and placed in alternative care, either institutions - residential facilities for children or in foster care (Virtuální knihovna NRP, undated). Moreover, too many children live in institutions while the availability of foster parents (especially the long-term foster parents) is insufficient. The strategy of Social Inclusion 2014-2020 states that there are also cases of children placed outside the family for non-legal reasons (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2014).

Families of gay men and lesbian women still do not have equal standing with those of a man and a woman (Hašková & Sloboda, 2019). Roma children progress comparatively less in Czech schooling system, and they are in a higher risk of being raised in institutional care facilities (European Roma Rights Centre, 2020). Poverty is being reproduced (Kuchařová et al., 2017; 2020).

*(ii) What are the pressing gaps in provision?*

Insufficient provision of childcare services is among the key problems. In Czechia, the capacity of crèche-type day care services is one of the lowest in Europe (OECD Family database, 2020). Neither preschool facilities, i.e., kindergartens, meet the capacity demands. The placement of a child at the age of three in a public-funded kindergarten may be a problem due to lack of places, especially in the suburbs of large cities.

A significant obstacle to the development of primary prevention services to support families is the absence of their legal regulation that would define the services, the rules of their operation and set up appropriate control mechanisms. Counselling services and other preventive care services fall under different ministries, and they are funded from various sources. This situation in connection with the short-term project-based support of individual non-profit organisations providing these services creates an uncertain environment for providers and users of such services.

Divorce or an unmarried couple breakup can be made worse for children by the existing system of custody hearings. The custody of children after divorce must always be decided by a court, providing room for parents and their lawyers to promote their own conflicting narratives of their marriage, the cause of divorce and the well-being of their children. Psychosocial

counselling and mediation are used only rarely and are trusted less than legal processes. This may lead to an escalation of parental conflict and traumatising of children.

*(iii) The Impact of Covid-19 on children and families*

Till the end of 2020, the Czech Republic witnessed two waves of Covid-19 pandemics, followed by restrictive governmental measures intended to protect public health. The first wave started in March 2020, and was tackled by an imminent and almost full lock-down: From 14/3 to 27/4, the government closed all shops and services, with the exception of grocery shops and several other types of shops; services remained closed until June 2020 and were opened gradually. The country borders were closed on 16/3, and the free movement of persons outside their homes was limited. Schools, including the kindergartens and nurseries, were closed from 11/3 to 25/5; then parents could choose to not send children to school until the end of the school year 30/6/2020.

After a relative loosening of measures during the summer, the second wave hit by the end of September 2020. Shops and services were closed from October 22 until the end of November. The schools were closed again on October 14, this time with the exception of kindergartens, and reopened gradually and with preventive measures from November 18 (two first grades of elementary schools) and November 30 (elementary schools). The second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in the Czech Republic affected significantly more people than the first and claimed more victims per capita than in most of the EU countries.

The government provided some protection and support schemes to people and businesses. During the spring school closure, parents with children under 13 could claim a care allowance if they had to stay at home from work due to care. The employed, and later on, also self-employed parents and parents working in short-time contracts were entitled to this allowance. During the second wave school closure, however, the care allowance was granted only to parents with school children under 10 and the amount was lower. The government provided a wage supplement programme for the employees who had to stop working or whose working hours were limited. The self-employed persons were entitled to a flat-rate per-day benefit. Despite of these measures, the economic situation of families has been deteriorating, especially for those where parents work in the most impacted sectors, such as the accommodation and food services sector, the wholesale and retail trade sector, and the cultural and personal services sectors.

*Families with children witnessed the negative impacts of the pandemic in several domains*

*Income*

According to representative research conducted by the PAQ Research Agency on the “life during the pandemic” (PAQ Research, 2020), the reduction of income affected mainly the households with children and with an income lower than the median Czech income. The parents in these families have lower education, short-term contracts, and no financial reserves. Overall, the worst impact of the first wave of Covid-19 and the subsequent measures was on single mothers and low-income households.

Single-parent households rated their economic situation as bad in 27% of cases, significantly more often than other types of households. According to EU-SILC 2019 data, only half of the single-parent households had a financial reserve of CZK 10,700 (compared to 81% of two-parent families) before the pandemic hit.

### *Work*

In November 2020, in a representative longitudinal survey, 3% of the working population declared losing their job, and another 18% declared that their work hours were limited or their work situation deteriorated (PAQ Research, 2020). The official data show a lower increase in unemployment among women than among men after the spring wave (Grossmann & Munich, 2020). This is probably due to the massive use of the care allowance by mothers. In addition, official data on unemployment do not capture the impacts on those working on short-term contracts or undeclared work. Especially mothers of children under nine very often work in unstable forms of employment – short-term contracts, fixed-term work, part-time work (15% of women in total; 20% of mothers of children under 9). Single mothers work in these precarious types of jobs more often than mothers living with a partner (16% of single mothers compared to 11.5% of mothers with a partner) (Dudová, 2020).

### *Care*

The closure of kindergartens and schools in spring and in autumn 2020 resulted in parents' need to care for children, educate them and often combine it with paid work. In mid-April, 20% of working women with children under the age of 18 stated that they had spent some time out of work caring for their children. Among men, the share was only 8% (PAQ Research, 2020). According to a study by Bajgar, Janský & Šedivý (2020), women are theoretically more likely to pursue professions that could be performed from home (30% of men and 40% of women). However, a representative longitudinal survey of the impacts of covid-19, conducted by PAQ Research Agency in mid-April 2020, concluded that more men than women worked from home in April (25.7% of employed men and 21.3% of employed women). During the autumn wave, the share of home-office work was significantly lower (16% of the working population in November 2020) (PAQ Research, 2020). According to Zykánová, Vosláš & Veselková (2020),

work from home represents an "absolutely fundamental benefit" for parents of children under the age of 13, but at the same time, about 30% of them state that they find it difficult to eliminate disturbing influences at home.

### *Mental wellbeing*

Most parents, and especially mothers, witnessed a higher "mental load", resulting from the concerns for the well-being of children and other dependent family members and from their increased care responsibilities. The results of the representative research conducted by PAQ Research Agency - *Life during the pandemic* showed important negative psychological effects of the pandemics on people, specifically on mothers with young children. At the turn of March and April 2020, about twice as many women as men (25% vs. 12%) observed symptoms of at least moderate depression or anxiety. "Only" 21% of women without minor children had symptoms of at least moderate depression or anxiety, compared with 37% of women with children. Before the pandemic they did not differ. In September and October, the mental health of women with minor children deteriorated again (PAQ Research, 2020).

### *Violence*

Because of the preventive measures, the number of incidents of domestic violence has increased in the Czech Republic, as well as the demand for the services of organisations helping victims of this violence. Due to restrictions on the victim's movement and social contacts in times of pandemic, violent people could more easily manipulate and control the victim. The situation has highlighted gaps in the provision of assistance to victims of violence by state institutions. While state institutions were somehow paralysed in the state of emergency, other types of helping organisations – especially non-governmental, non-profit organisations—immediately introduced new online services, skype consultations and other support measures (Nyklová, 2020).

These negative impacts are not necessarily specific to all the families. They often concern only certain groups of parents and children. However, they often intersect and combine. Those who are the most at risk and who suffered most from the negative impacts of the pandemic and the preventive measures according to available data were: families with low incomes and insecure position in the labour market, especially one-parent families; parents of young children who had to provide home-schooling in combination with paid work; children who suffered from isolation and disruption of their daily life; and victims of domestic violence and abuse who could not seek help during the curfew.

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## 7 FRANCE – National report on family support policy & provision

**Michel Boutanquoi**

### 7.1 Trends and issues related to demography

#### *Fertility rates*

Year	Total fertility rate
2010	2,03
2015	1,96
2016	1,92
2017	1,90
2018	1,88
2019	1,87

According Insee, in 2019, the total fertility rate (TFR) is 1.87 children per woman, after 1.88 in 2018. After four years of decline between 2015 and 2018, the TFR therefore stabilizes. It hovered around 2.0 children per woman between 2006 and 2014.

#### *Families with children by number of children \**

	1 child	2 children	3 children	4 children
2011	45,2%	38,3%	12,8%	3,7%
2016	44,8%	38,7%	12,7%	3,8%

*Note.* No data published in France beyond 2016. There is some stability

*Percentage of the population from 0 to 18 \**

2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
24,8%	24,6%	24,6%	24,4%	24,3%	24,2%

*Percentage of population over working (retiring) age \**

2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
16,6%	18,4%	18,9%	19,3%	19,7%	20,1%

The population over working age is growing with the increase in the general population although there is an increase in the number of years of contributions required to retire (Insee 2019).

*Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities \**

In France, as elsewhere in Europe, vulnerable groups are vulnerable on the basis of inequality and discrimination: single women with children, precarious families, immigrant families and young people.

*Migration patterns \**

In 2018 the foreign population living in France amounts to 4.8 million people, i.e. 7.1% of the total population. It is made up of 4.1 million immigrants who have not acquired French nationality and 0.7 million people born in France of foreign nationality. 46.1% of immigrants living in France were born in Africa. 33.5% were born in Europe, 14,5 % were born in Asia. 52 per cent of immigrants are women, compared to 44 per cent of men. (sources Insee 2019 et report of the ministry of the interior 2019).

**7.2 Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles and children's living arrangements**

*Family household types \**

	2010	2015
One adult	33,9	35,2
One adult with children	5,5	5,6
Two adults	30,4	30,1
Two adults with children	24,6	23,3
Three adults or more	3,5	3,6
Three adults or more with children	2,1	2,2

*Marriage and divorce rates \**

Rate marriage from 3,9 in 2010 to 3,7 in 2017 rate divorce from 2,1 in 2010 to 1,9 in 2017. In 2017, 228,000 marriages were celebrated in France, of which 221,000 were between persons of different sexes and 7,000 between persons of the same sex. In 2016, 192,000 civil solidarity pacts (Pacs) were concluded, 3,000 more than in 2015. Of these, 7,000 were concluded between persons of the same sex.(sources Insee 2019)

*Lone-parent families \**

2016 :22 % lone mother 18,6; one father 3.4. This share has doubled since 1990, when it stood at 12 per cent.(sources Insee 2019)

*New family forms such as same-sex couple households \**

According to Insee (2019) there would be 20,000 people, i.e. 10,000 same-sex households where at least one child lives at least part of the time. The study points out that these households are eight times out of ten female households and that the children are generally born before the current union.

*Family structures and changes across social groups \**

Insee (2019) data for 9% of families with minor child(ren) are recomposed families

*Children and youth living in institutions \**

There are no overall statistics on children living in institutions.

*Children in out-of-home care such as foster care \**

The number of minors in child protection care is estimated at 295,357 in France as whole, i.e. a rate of 20.1 % under 18 years of age. about 150,000 children are out of the home; 50 % are in foster care; The judicial measures concern 114,000 children, i.e. 77%. (Abassi 2020, ONPE 2020).

*Home-based support \**

About 140000 children are benefiting from home-based measures (sources DRESS 2020): The statistics give a number of measures and a child may benefit from several measures, which makes it difficult to assess the number of children concerned. The number of out-of-home children is on the rise. Child welfare data varies by source. For several years now, the ONPE (Observatoire National de la Protection de l'Enfance) has been centralizing and analyzing data from the departments.

### **7.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare.**

*Poverty rates \**

The poverty rate was 13,4% in 2018 (it fell slightly in 2012 -14,1- and 2014- 13,3- and has been increasing since. One child in five lives below the poverty line in France, i.e. nearly 3 million children (sources Insee 2019)

*Employment/unemployment rates \**

The unemployment rate was 12.7 in 2014 and 10.6 in 2018. (Insee 2019). Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage related to gender, age, ethnicity, migrant status and other social dimensions \*

The unemployment rate for women and men is of equal importance in 2018 (9,1). the youth unemployment rate is high (20,7). The unemployment rate of the foreign population is 20. There are no statistics by origin. the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is 17. (Insee 2019)

*Patterns of education disadvantage \**

According to the Ministry of Education, 321,476 students with disabilities were in school in France. 13% of pupils are enrolled in the framework of priority education networks (schools with additional resources in disadvantaged districts, DEPP 2020).

*Major social welfare trends such as disadvantage risks, welfare benefit receipt levels \**

There are questions of financial resources, but also of the conception and effectiveness of public policies to respond to social challenges.

*Housing problems \**

In 2019, the Abbé Pierre Foundation estimates that 4 million people will be badly housed either by lack of personal housing (of which 143,000 are homeless) or by forced cohabitation (643,000) or by deteriorating housing conditions: Housing too small, unhealthy, too expensive to heat.(2 million). Persons leaving institutions (child protection psychiatric hospital, prison...) are particularly at risk.

*Summary: The broader socio-economic context and trends which influences children's, parental and family circumstances and environments \**

Poverty and precariousness are the main concerns for many families. They translate into issues of access to employment, access to housing, access to health, access to culture. The confinement linked to the covid has accentuated inequalities. The current deterioration in the employment situation is likely to reinforce these inequalities. France seems to be rediscovering the importance of state-led redistribution policies to combat inequalities. Specialists in family policies stress that they are both economic policies supporting families (family allowances), which are increasingly becoming the last safety net for families in highly vulnerable situations, and intervention policies for parents and children as day nursery, support for parenthood. A recent report by the Mission information sur adaptation de la politique familiale française aux défis du XXIe siècle (National Assembly 2020) gives an account of this. It deals with all the financial aid and the issues at stake on the one hand, and family life on the other (in the broadest sense, housing, reconciling family and working life, childcare, parenthood, etc.).

**7.4 The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions and actors' which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision***Membership to the EU \**

Yes

*Relationship with European Union \**

France is a founding member of the European Union. It has played a decisive role at all stages of its construction (Huberdeau 2018). The attachment is deep but scepticism is growing with

regard to the economic policies pursued but also a feeling of loss of influence as pointed out in a recent parliamentary report (Caresche and Lequiller 2016).

Family policies do not fall within the Union's remit. At European level, family policies are tending to converge (Dumon 2008) even if the disparities remain significant (Thevenon, Adema and Ali 2014). The well-being of families and parenting support are a matter for national policy. The family is considered a source of protection (S raphin et Messu 2019), some aspects of which are linked to European policy.

*Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy*

\*

The national union of family associations (UNAF) is one of the main interlocutors of the public authorities. It brings together many local, regional and national associations to defend a policy of support for families (financial, material). There are also many associations that defend and support families on specific issues (disability, schools, homosexual parents, family mediation, child protection, etc.). The Catholic Church remains influential especially on social issues (homosexual marriage, medically assisted procreation).

*Influential lobbying groups* \*

No entries yet.

*Influential policy/research networks* \*

- The Observatoire national de la protection de l'enfance support for research on child protection and family support <https://www.onpe.gouv.fr>
- The Caisse nationale des allocations familiales (CAF) publishes data on family policies. It publishes the review *Revue des politiques sociales et familiales* <https://www.persee.fr/collection/caf>
- The F d ration nationale des  coles de parents et d' ducateurs management of services for families ( <https://www.ecoledesparents.org/>)
- The Union nationale des associations familiales federation of associations, publishes "Recherches Familiales" (<https://www.unaf.fr/spip.php?rubrique181>)

Some university teams are working on these issues :

Centre de recherche Education et Formation (team Education familiale et interventions sociales aupr s des familles -Efis) <https://efis.parisnanterre.fr/>

The chair “Enfance, bien-être et parentalité” directed by Claude Martin who recently published “Le déterminisme parental en question: la « parentalisation » du social “ (2020)

*The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support \**

Family policies are the responsibility of the state. The management of certain aspects is entrusted to the departments (child protection, the elderly, minimum income). Municipalities can develop specific policies (in sensitive neighbourhoods, by supporting associations which set up actions - homework help, discussion groups).

*The democratic system and main political parties; (unitary vs federal state structures; centralised vs decentralised structures) \**

France’s political and administrative organisation is complex. It is said to be decentralised since local authorities (region, department, city) have specific competences which have been transferred by the State. At the same time, it is centralised because the government, through its services (prefecture), intervenes in the different territories. The levels of decision making can then clash.

The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular (e.g. Ministry roles, national vs local/regional government roles) \*

The definition of redistributive policies and the legislative framework are the responsibility of the State. The Ministry of Social Affairs also plays an incentive role (this was the case with the definition of policies to support parenthood and financial support for local initiatives. The regions have no role in family policies. Departments manage certain policies (disability, elderly, child protection, which gives rise to important differences between departments. Cities do not have any particular competences but intervene in the framework of social development, some aspects of which concern families.

*The ways in and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policy-making and reviews \**

Citizen participation in the definition of public policies is very poorly developed. Associations of professionals and family associations are consulted but cannot be said to be involved.

**7.5 List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year 2000. For each policy document indicate**

*Whether participation of families and young people has been mentioned in the document & The extent to which such participation has been implemented \**

## 7.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services

### *The priorities in child welfare and family policy \**

Child protection oscillates between helping parents, reminding them of their rights in relation to services and focusing on the child (when he/she is placed). The 2007 law stressed the importance of working with parents when the 2016 law tends to marginalise them in the construction of projects for their child (Pioli,2006)  
The trend in the field is to develop the participation of parents and children at all stages of the intervention. The movement begins and is based on a professional interest in the approach.

### *The main types of family provision and support and key features (e.g. different types of cash support (universal and targeted), work-family reconciliation measures and children's/family services, child care etc) \**

The age of 20 (adjusted from 2015 onwards according to income, between €33 and €132 for 2 children.

Family quotient: Each family corresponds to a certain number of shares, variable according to its composition. The taxable income is divided into as many shares as the household has, which favours families with children.

The family supplement, paid on a means-tested basis to families with at least three Children.

Family support allowance (ASF) for single-parent families (EUR 115.99 per dependent child).

The birth grant is awarded to the household or to the person whose resources do not exceed a ceiling for each unborn child.

The shared childcare benefit (PréParE) allocated to a parent who interrupts or reduces his or her professional activity in order to care for a child under the age of three.

Personal housing assistance is means-tested and is granted to tenants or first-time home buyers for their main residence.

The supplement for free choice of childcare (CMG) is part of the early childhood care (Paje). This is a partial payment for the remuneration of an approved childminder.

The means-tested back-to-school allowance (ARS) (369.95 euros for children aged 6 to

10, 390.35 euros between 11 and 14 and 403.88 euros between 15 and 18)

*The types of funding involved such as state, charity vs private sector providers and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners \**

All financial aid is state aid. Ad hoc supplements are provided by the departments and municipalities. Charitable associations are involved in the food sector.

*Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations. \**

The court of auditors, the general inspectorate of social affairs, and parliamentarians publish fairly regular reports (see below for parliament) that can lead to reorientation of policies.

It has been noted that the policy of support for families (originally a policy to promote the birth rate) is in part becoming a policy to combat poverty in times of crisis and unemployment. The risk is to keep part of the population (mainly women) out of the labour market.

*Limitations in national and official data and statistics \**

The Directorate of Research, Studies, Evaluation and Statistics (DREES) and National Institut of economic statistics are the main government agency for the production of statistical data. Its work is recognised. main government agency for the production of statistical data. Their work is recognised.

### **7.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision. What are the prominent policy and practice developments related to family support services from children's rights, social equality and evidence-informed perspectives?**

*What are the pressing policy, practice and research challenges impeding developments?*

This is not an easy question. As we have noted, financial policies are partly shifting from supporting the birth rate to an element of the fight against poverty. However, they are also concerned with gender equality (by promoting birth leave for fathers, reconciliation of private and professional life) and early childcare conditions (which favour women's work). Since the 1990s, family support policies, and in particular policies to support parenthood, have been marked both by a real concern to provide parents with support in their child-rearing tasks and by practices to monitor and disseminate standards to disadvantaged families suspected of failing (Pioli 2006, Chauvière 2008). Since the invention of family policies, the question of State interference has been raised. This has been based on health needs (reducing infant mortality through a policy of hygiene education and therefore intervention in families) and social needs (preventing abuse). It exists as an injunction to be a good parent (Martin 2014) in the name of the child.

*What are the pressing gaps in provision? \**

Legislative changes have made it possible to recognise the different ways in which the family is made up, even if this still gives rise to heated debates, and to make timid progress on equality between men and women. It tends to take better account of the rights of the child (not simply as a being to be protected).

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## 8 GERMANY - National report on family support policy & provision

### Ute Ziegenhain & Gerhard Suess

As the national representative in EUROFAMNET please complete the 7 questions below which ask you about the national approach and development in family support. The first 3 questions are mainly about your national trends. (In the excel sheet provided you will find the statistics needed to answer the questions) The next 4 questions ask you to summarize and comment on the national context and development.

The data provided in the answers below is to be based on official data, policy documents, relevant literature and websites.

Eurostat statistics are taken from the Excel sheet provided

### 8.1. Trends and issues related to demography

#### (i) Fertility rates

Table 1. *Fertility Rates*

Year	Fertility rate
2010	1.39
2015	1.50
2016	1.60
2017	1.57
2018	1.57

Source: Eurostat.

(ii) Families with children by number of children

Table 2. Types of families (including at least one child under the age of 18)

Year	Total	Married couples	Life partnership	Single-parent household			Number of members Per family
				Total	Father	Mother	
2010	8,123	5,846	701	1,575	151	1,425	3.61
2011	8,114	5,739	752	1,622	156	1,466	3.59
2012	8,104	5,699	762	1,643	165	1,478	3.58
2013	8,064	5,639	810	1,615	167	1,448	3.58
2014	8,061	5,589	833	1,639	180	1,459	3.57
2015	8,032	5,544	843	1,644	182	1,461	3.57
2016	8,199	5,697	880	1,622	182	1,439	3.59
2017	8,204	5,721	934	1,549	190	1,359	3.61
2018	8,049	5,643	915	1,490	181	1,310	3.62
2019	8,189	5,723	942	1,524	185	1,339	3.62

Note: Numbers in 1000; Source: <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Haushalte-Familien/Tabellen/2-8-Ir-familien.html>

Table 3. *Total number and type of family according to the number of children under the age of 18 in 2019*

	Total	Family types		
		Married couple	Life partnership	Single-parent household
	1,000			
Total	8,189	5,723	942	1,524
One child under 18	4,151	2,553	591	1007
Two children under 18	3,061	2,370	284	408
Three or more children under 18	977	801	67	109
	in %			
Total	100	69.9	11.5	18.6
One child under 18	100	61.5	14.2	24.3
Two children under 18	100	77.4	9.3	13.3
Three or more children under 18	100	81.9	6.9	11.2

Source: <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Haushalte-Familien/Tabellen/2-5-familien.html>

(iii) *Percentage of the population from 0 to 18*

Table 4. *Percentage of population from age 0 to 18*

Year	%
2010	18.8
2015	18.2
2016	18.3
2017	18.4
2018	18.4
2019	18.4

Source: Eurostat.

*(iv) Percentage of population over working (retiring) age*

Table 5. *Percentage of population over working (retiring) age*

Year	%
2010	20.7
2015	21.0
2016	21.1
2017	21.2
2018	21.4
2019	21.5

Source: Eurostat.

(v) *Migration patterns*

Table 6. *Total number of immigrants*

Year	Total number
2013	692,713
2014	884,893
2015	1,561,047
2016	1,029,852
2017	917,109
2018	893,886

*Note.* All geopolitical entities; Source: Eurostat.

Table 7. *Total number of immigrants under the age of 15*

Year	Total number
2013	100,435
2014	143,365
2015	313,253
2016	194,948
2017	153,895
2018	135,622

*Note.* All geopolitical entities; Source: Eurostat.

Table 8. *Total number of immigrants*

Year	Total number
2013	36,754
2014	58,048
2015	216,316
2016	86,170
2017	37,896
2018	35,116

*Note.* From countries other than EU, EFTA, and Candidate countries with low Human Development Index (HDI);  
Source: Eurostat.

Table 9. *Total number of immigrants under the age of 15*

Year	Total number
2013	4,997
2014	7,690
2015	41,417
2016	16,156
2017	6,244
2018	6,500

*Note.* From countries other than EU, EFTA and Candidate countries with low Human Development Index (HDI);  
Source: Eurostat.

## 8.2. Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles and children's living arrangements

### (i) Family household types

Table 10. Percentage of family household types

Household type	Year	
	2010	2015
One adult	38.4	39.3
One adult with dependent children	4.6	4.7
Two adults	31.1	31.2
Two adults with dependent children	18.3	18.4
Three or more adults	5.1	4.4
Three or more adults and dependent children	2.6	2.1

Source: Eurostat.

### (ii) Marriage and divorce rates

Table 11. Crude marriage rates

Year	Rates
2010	4.7
2015	4.9

2016	5.0
2017	4.9

Source: Eurostat.

Table 12. *First marriage of females*

Year	Rates	Mean age
2015	0.61	30.9
2016	0.62	31.1
2017	0.62	31.2

Source: Eurostat.

Table 13. *Crude divorces*

Year	Rates	Number of divorces per 100 marriages
2010	2.3	49.0
2015	2.0	40.8
2016	2.0	39.6
2017	1.9	37.7

Source: Eurostat.

*(iii) Children and youth living in institutions*

Table 14. *Child protection – number of children taken into care*

Year	Total	Type of care	
		Temporarily	Regular
2014	48,059	X	X
2015	77,645	X	X
2016	84,230	X	X
2017	61,383	11,101	50,282
2018	52,590	6,385	46,205

Source: [https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Soziales/Kinderhilfe-Jugendhilfe/Publikationen/Downloads-Kinder-und-Jugendhilfe/vorlaeufige-schutzmassnahmen-5225203187004.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Soziales/Kinderhilfe-Jugendhilfe/Publikationen/Downloads-Kinder-und-Jugendhilfe/vorlaeufige-schutzmassnahmen-5225203187004.pdf?__blob=publicationFile)

### 8.3. Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare

#### (i) Poverty rates

Table 15. *At risk of poverty rates*

Year	Total	Female	Male	Below the age of 18
2010	15.6	16.4	14.9	17.5
2011	15.8	16.8	14.9	15.6
2012	16.1	17.2	14.9	15.2
2013	16.1	17.2	15.0	14.7

2014	16.7	17.4	15.9	15.1
2015	16.7	17.4	15.9	14.6
2016	16.5	17.8	15.2	15.4
2017	16.1	17.1	15.0	15.2
2018	16.0	16.8	15.2	14.5
2019	14.8	15.7	13.9	12.1

Source: <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Einkommen-Konsum-Lebensbedingungen/Lebensbedingungen-Armutsgefaehrdung/Tabellen/armutsschwelle-gefaehrdung-silc.html>

Table 16. *Severe material deprivation rates*

Year	Total	Age < 18
2010	4.5	5.2
2015	4.4	4.7
2016	3.7	3.6
2017	3.4	3.3
2018	3.1	2.7

Source: Eurostat.

Table 17. *At risk of poverty or social exclusion rates*

Year	Total	Age < 18
2010	19.7	21.7

2015	20.0	18.5
2016	19.7	19.3
2017	19.0	18.0
2018	18.7	17.3

Source: Eurostat.

(ii) *Employment/unemployment rates*

Table 18. *Unemployment rates*

Year	Rates
2010	7.0
2015	4.6
2016	4.1
2017	3.8
2018	3.4
2019	3.2

Source: Eurostat.

Table 19. *Male and female employment rates in 2009 and 2019 in %*

Total		Male		Female	
2009	2019	2009	2019	2009	2019
54.4	60.0	66.6	65.1	48.4	55.0

Source: <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Arbeit/Arbeitsmarkt/Erwerbstaetigkeit/Tabellen/erwerbstaetige-erwerbstaetigenquote.html>

Table 20. *Employment rates of natives and migrants in 2014*

	Native	Migrant
Total	79.6	69.3
Male	83.2	78.4
Female	75.9	60.6

Source: <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Arbeit/Arbeitsmarkt/Erwerbstaetigkeit/Tabellen/ahm-2014-zugewanderte-etq-elq.html>

Table 21. *Employment and activity rates*

Year	Rates
2010	71.3
2015	74.0
2016	74.7

2017	75.2
2018	75.9

Source: Eurostat.

(iii) Patterns of education disadvantage

Table 22. Level of education depending on gender and migration status in 2019 (Notes: secondary school leaving certificate (SSLC))

Education	Total	Without migration background	With migration background	Female			Male		
				Total	Without m.	With m.	Total	Without m.	With m.
Total	70,667	54,937	15,729	35,927	28,224	7,703	34,740	26,713	8,026
Still at school	2,500	1,601	899	1,251	811	439	1,249	789	460
SSLC	20,202	16,250	3,952	10,097	8,374	1,723	10,105	7,876	2,229
Intermediate SSLC	21,218	17,877	3,341	11,540	9,852	1,688	9,678	8,026	1,652
Higher SSLC	23,656	18,233	5,424	11,470	8,706	2,764	12,187	9,527	2,660
Without school leaving certification	2,855	842	2,014	1,462	419	1,043	1,394	423	971

Source: <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bildung-Forschung-Kultur/Bildungsstand/Tabellen/liste-bildungsabschluss-privathaush-allgemeine-schulbildung.html>

(iv) Housing problems

Table 23. *Overcrowding rates*

Year	Total	Age < 18
2010	7.1	11.7
2015	7.0	11.4
2016	7.2	10.7
2017	7.2	9.9
2018	7.4	9.4

Source: Eurostat.

Table 24. *Housing cost overburden*

Year	Total	Age < 18
2010	14.5	11.7
2015	15.6	11.4
2016	15.8	10.7
2017	14.5	9.9
2018	14.2	9.4

Source: Eurostat.

**8.4. The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions and actors' which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision**

(i) *Membership to the EU:*

YES

(ii) *Relationship with the European Union*

The European Union does not have any contractual arrangements that explicitly affect family policy in Germany. However, certain EU guidelines, such as the Maternity Leave Guideline or the Parental Leave Guideline have a certain impact on German family policy. Additionally, there are common political goals with the EU; for example, the expansion of extra-familial childcare (Barcelona targets), the increase of female employment (Lisbon strategy), as well as the mastery of the demographic change.

*Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support, and social policy*

In Germany, the federal government is mainly responsible for family support. The Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth ensures that the interests of families are a cross-sectional topic and are systematically considered in the agenda of the federal government. The Federal ministry's task includes supporting youth services welfare organizations, such as family associations, associations for family education or family counselling. Regarding the 16 federal states, the family ministries complement and shape the federal political agenda. They coordinate issues of family policy among themselves on a continual basis. At the municipal level, authority associations, such as the German Association of Cities and Towns as well as the Association of German Counties, contribute to family policy.

*Influential lobbying groups*

Several youth services and social welfare services organizations are continually engaged in contributing to steer and shape family policy in Germany. Among the relevant services organizations are the federation of voluntary welfare organizations, or nationwide church-based organizations, both evangelic and catholic. The Child and Youth Welfare Association represents the nationwide association of official and private youth welfare organizations and institutions (AGJ). Likewise, professional associations, for example, the Federal Association for Socio-Educational Support (AFET), the German Association of Pediatricians (BVKJÄ), the German Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry/Psychotherapy (DGKJP), etc. contribute to shaping German family policy.

*Influential policy/research networks*

- German Science Foundation (DFG): association under private law that, on a competitive basis, funds all branches of science, among them developmental psychology and family research
- Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF): in response to actual socio-political issues, such as child maltreatment and/or trauma, certain funding lines can be initiated, that allow to promote the expansion of research as well as service delivery
- National Centre of Early Aid (NZFH): central knowledge platform for early help (zero to three), funded by the Federal Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) in order to improve the development opportunities of children, particularly from families in need
- German Youth Institute (DJI): research on the life situations of children, adolescents, and families; advising the federal government, states, and municipalities

*(iii) The political system and its relevance to family policy/ family support*

Due to the federal system in Germany, primarily the federal government is responsible for family policy; the government determines legal bases, for example, family law, and commits the states and municipalities to particularly put families under protection of the state order (fundamental right). The federal states complement and shape the governmental requirements via statutory benefits on their own. Among these are certain issues such as free attendance of day care or parental leave and related benefits. Likewise, municipalities can set own priorities or foci.

*(iv) The democratic system and main political parties: unitary vs. federal state structures; centralized vs. decentralized structures*

The German democratic system is a federal parliamentary republic; federal legislative power is vested in the parliament (Bundestag), and the representative body of the 16 federal states (Bundesrat). Although the Bundestag is more powerful than the Bundesrat, consensual agreement is often required in legislative processes since federal legislation frequently has to be executed by state agencies. Currently, seven parties are represented in the Bundestag: CDU/CSU (Christian Democrats), SPD (Social Democrats), GRÜNE (Greens), AfD (Right Wing), FDP (Liberals), DIE LINKE (The Left). In principle, judiciary, executive, and legislature are functioning independently from each other.

*(v) The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular (e.g., Ministry roles, national vs local/regional government roles)*

As indicated above, the federal government is legislatively responsible for family policy, and, in addition, supports family services welfare organizations. The child and youth welfare includes all the remits and service provisions of public (youth welfare office) and free agencies of youth welfare (associations of free welfare at local and state level) on the basis of the youth welfare law (Eighth Book of the Social Code; SGB VIII). Among these are educational institutions for parents and family support (Familienbildung) or family counselling centres (Familienberatungsstellen). Under another book of the Social Code (SGB IX), early support and treatment for disabled children are organized. Furthermore, pregnancy counselling centres provide cost free information and services concerning pregnancy, pregnancy-related problems (along with a foundation for financial support), childbirth, and family planning.

*(vi) The ways in and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policymaking and reviews*

In Germany, the above-mentioned youth services and social welfare services organizations are representing the interests and concerns of professionals as well as families, respectively, children and youth. They are systematically heard in cases of legal developments and/or legal changes by the government (e.g., actually the reform of the Eighth Book of the Social Code; SGB VIII including issues such as safeguarding children in foster care, service delivery for children of psychiatrically ill parents, etc.), and bring in the interests of families and children when needed. Likewise, this is done by the above-mentioned scientific as well as other relevant associations.

**8.5. List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year 2000. For each policy document indicate**

*(i) whether participation of families and young people has been mentioned in the document*

*(ii) the extent to which such participation has been implemented*

- Family reports (Familienberichte; every second parliamentary term; eight reports to date) on the situation of families, usually on a certain issue (e.g., time policy for families)
- Reports on the situation of young people and the achievements of the Child and Youth Services in Germany (Kinder- und Jugendhilfebericht; 14 reports to date)
- Report concerning the interdisciplinary and interministerial working group on the situation of children with psychiatrically ill parents and recommendations for optimizing service provision (commissioned by the German Bundestag; spring 2020)

- Survey of the German Youth Institute (AIDA; “Growing up in Germany: Everyday Worlds”); continuous data source of the living conditions and the process of growing up of children and youth in the context of family as well as of daycare, school, and education
- a) participation of children and youth is considered a comprehensive principle, and is generally defined by German law, such as in the Youth Welfare Law (Eighth Book of the Social Code (SGB VIII) as well as in the UN-conventions of the rights of the child and in the UN-convention on the Rights of People with disabilities, both ratified by the Federal Republic of Germany.
- b) in order to optimize ‘participation’ for children and families, various aspects are addressed. Beyond an overall aim to reduce poverty that significantly reduces opportunities for participation, there are issues such as the right to contact the youth welfare office in all matters of education and development, the right to be involved in all public youth welfare decisions that affect them (depending on their level of development, e.g. appropriate advise of their rights in administrative procedures/family court/administrative court). Following the ratification of the UN-convention on the Rights of People with disabilities, nationwide barrier-free structures are currently implemented in order to foster self-determined participation (e.g., school assistants). With respect to sexual abuse and maltreatment, protection concepts and standards are broadly implemented in residential care, boarding schools, as well as in foster care.

**8.6. The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services:**

*(i) The priorities in child welfare and family policy*

- Relieve families financially
- Continue to support families in combining work and family life (more flexible work hours; part-time for a limited period before returning to previous working hours)
- Improve education and participation services for children of needy families (educational and sharing benefits for children, such as school supplies, amount for social and cultural activities, lunch in daycare etc.)
- Continue to support the states in establishing daycare facilities
- Permanently improving the quality of early education (supporting the federal states via a legal act that secures financing until 2022)

- Expansion of all-day educational and childcare offers (prospective legal entitlement)
- (ii) *The main types of family provision and support and key features (e.g., different types of cash support (universal and targeted, work-family reconciliation measures and children's/family services, childcare, etc.)*
- child benefit and supplement, parental leave, parental allowance
- extra-familial day care (centre or childminder), legally entitled from the first year of life until the start of schooling; for families with low incomes day care is free of charge
- (iii) *The types of funding involve such as state, charity vs private sector providers and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners*

The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision as mentioned above are funded by the federal government, the federal states and the municipalities; support provisions by the municipalities, such as youth welfare is referred to them by the federal government and/or the states

*(iv) Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations*

A comprehensive and continuous health monitoring with respect to psychosocial and medical indicators has only partially been realized. Of particular importance is the so-called KIGGS-Study ("Study on Health of Children and Adolescents in Germany", carried out by the Robert Koch Institute, RKI). KIGGS is a long-term survey, repeatedly providing nationwide representative data on children and adolescents (zero to 18) and, in addition, follows them up until adulthood.

The Child and Youth Welfare Statistics Office (AKJ<sup>Stat</sup>) processes statistical data on educational support, space and personnel requirements in day care, child endangerment (maltreatment) for professional practice, politics and the public. The Office regularly publishes reports («Child and Youth Welfare Report», magazine "Commented Data on Child and Youth Welfare" (Kom<sup>Dat</sup>), and is funded by the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, the Ministry of Children, Family, Refugees and Integration of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia and the Technical University Dortmund.

The National Centre of Early Aid (NZFH) launches surveys on the needs of young families and adequate service provision, as well as research on various relevant issues for families.

*(v) Limitations in national and official data and statistics*

On the whole, statistics and monitoring concerning children and families is limited, and, in addition, is not well coordinated and not well “translated” and implemented. In particular, there is still a lack of continuous data and statistics on children and families in high-risk constellations; this is especially true for dark field data, such as the context of maltreatment, neglect, and sexual abuse.

### **8.7. Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision.**

What are the prominent policy and practice developments related to family support services from children’s rights, social equality and evidence-informed perspectives?

*(i) What are the pressing policy, practice and research challenges impeding developments?*

Family policy requires to intelligently combine framework conditions to support children and their families on a general and broad level (e.g., day care facilities, quality of day care) as well as to support children and families with specific needs that require intensive and often long-term service provision. In particular, appropriate support and service provision for families in need require to assemble support and service provision out of different and interdisciplinary help-systems pursuant to different books of social codes (e.g., youth welfare system, health care system). Interdisciplinary service provision implies reliable collaborative and networking structures. Municipal interdisciplinary networks that were systematically established in the course of the so called “Early Aid” (Frühe Hilfen) are currently discussed as a basis for support and service provision beyond infancy, as well as for certain high-risk groups, such as children of psychiatrically ill parents. Recently, a nationwide working group on behalf of the German Parliament delivered recommendations to optimize support and service provision for children and youth of psychiatrically ill parents.

*(ii) What are the pressing gaps in provision?*

Appropriate support and service provision, especially for high-risk families, require a complementary and broad repertoire of service provision and specific family programs that cover the continuum of low-threshold up to high-threshold support offers. In Germany, such an interdisciplinary and comprehensive repertoire of service delivery is lacking. Consequently, such a repertoire needs to comprise the specific needs of children and their families. Thus, an infrastructure that overcomes the “pillarization” of the different books of social codes is needed, at least for high-risk families.

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## 9 HUNGARY - National report on family support policy & provision

**András Gábos**

### 9.1 Trends and issues related to demography

#### (i) Fertility rates

Fertility reached a historically low level near 2010 (TFR 1.23 in 2011), followed by an increase afterwards and levelling in the late 2010s at 1.49 (Table 1). However, the increase in TFR did not result in a growing number of births due to the decreasing number of women in their childbearing age. While this is the highest figure for two decades, it still falls well short of the reproduction level (over 2.0 - not experienced in Hungary since 1979). In comparison with other European states, the Hungarian fertility rate is still below the European Union average.

The propensity for having children varies greatly across different categories of the population in terms of educational level and family size. The willingness to have children has grown significantly among relatively young people with primary education. Furthermore, the chances of two-child families becoming large families (with three or more children) have increased. At the same time, the proportion of childless and single-child women has also grown steadily. And so, the proportion of families with two children has dropped significantly (Kapitány and Spéder, 2018).

Increasing fertility rates during the 2010s might be related to several factors. These include, among others, the postponement effect and increased spending on cash or near-cash benefits of family policy programs.

For unknown reasons, TFRs for 2015-2018 reported by Eurostat differ from those published by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office. The latter is used in this description.

Table 1. *Fertility indicators*

Year	Total fertility rates	Mean age at first birth
2010	1.25	27.7

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2015	1.44	27.9
2016	1.49	27.8
2017	1.49	28.8
2018	1.49	28.2
2019	1.49	-

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Source. Eurostat Database (2020).

*(ii) Families with children by number of children*

Overall, the share of households with children in Hungary has been shrinking steadily in the last decades. While the number and share of households with one child aged less than 18 stayed about the same since 1990, the number and share of households with at least two children decreased considerably between 1990 and 2011, with some recovery in the 2010s (Table 2).

According to Monostori and Murinkó (2018: 185), among households with children aged under 19, the proportion of those with two children fell between 1990 and 2011. This trend stopped between 2011 and 2016. The proportion of households with two children of this age was 42% in 1990, 33% in 2011, and 34% in 2016. The share of one-child households increased until 2011 (from 47% to 54% between 1990 and 2011), but this trend had halted by 2016. Among households considered here, the proportion of those with one child was 53% in 2016. However, the share of households with three or more children has steadily increased since the change of regime, although the increase has been very moderate: from 11% in 1990 to 13% in 2016.

Table 2. *Households by the age and number of children*

Year	Share of households with children aged 18 and below (%)	Share of households with one child aged 18 and below among households with children aged 0-24 (%)	Share of households with 2+ children aged 18 and below among households with children aged 0-24 (%)
1990	38.8	37.0	40.6
2001	32.7	35.6	33.8
2011	27.3	39.3	31.5
2016	25.9	39.4	34.2

Source: Monostori and Murinkó (2018). *Source of the data:* HCSO Census and Microcensus.

*Notes.* Data are from an academic publication (Monostori and Murinkó 2018) and their structure not fully fit the one asked by the survey question. The paper discusses trends based on information that are not available for those in published tables but are not full as to be included above. For convenience, the relevant part of the study is cited below. Data above for some household type categories also includes an estimate, which does not affect the interpretation of the trends. The above figures do not include multigenerational households, but those of couples and single parents only.

*(iii) Percentage of the population from 0 to 19*

The share of children in the Hungarian population is decreasing, especially when compared to earlier benchmarks (1990: 27.9%). The main driver of this trend is low and decreasing fertility, and - also related to this – the decreasing number of women in their childbearing age. The levelling figures back to 2015 are due to a recovery in fertility rates in these years compared to the historically low level measured in 2011 (Table 3).

Table 3. *Population 19 years and under*

Year	%
2010	19.2
2015	18.6
2016	18.5
2017	18.5
2018	18.5
2019	18.5

Source. Hungarian Central Statistical Office Stadat database.

*(iv) Percentage of population over working (retiring) age*

The share of population aged 65+ is increasing in Hungary at a fairly high pace. Enduring decrease in fertility trends and low immigration are the main factors behind these trends (Table 4). The population share of elderly could be even higher if mortality among them would not be one of the worst in the European Union (Spéder, 2019). Besides fertility, mortality, and migration, age distribution over time is also shaped by population waves, and by how large cohorts progress in the age pyramid. All these developments result in worsening dependency ratios (1990: 20% of individuals aged 65+ over those aged 15-64; 2017: 28%) (Spéder, 2019).

Table 4. *Population over working age*

Year	%
2010	16.6
2015	17.9

2016	18.3
2017	18.7
2018	18.9
2019	19.3

Source: Eurostat Database (2020).

Notes. At present, the retiring age in Hungary is age 65 for men and age 62 for women.

#### (v) Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities

In Hungary, there are 13 ethnic minorities recognized officially by law and forming a national level self-government body. The share of persons belonging to one of these ethnic minorities was 6.5% according to the last Census (2011). Since 2011, the HCSO coordinated data collections use a double identity question on ethnicity (which means that one person may identify themselves as belonging to two different ethnic groups, including Hungarian).

Out of these, the Roma are both the most numerous and the most exposed to the risk of poverty and social exclusion (Gábos, Szivós and Tátrai, 2015; HCSO, 2019). Their population share was 3.2% according to the latest Census (Table 5). There are alternative estimates to count the number of the Roma, using alternative methodologies, like snow-ball survey (e.g., Kemény, Janky and Lengyel, 2004) or external identification method (e.g., Péntzes, Tátrai and Pásztor 2018), which put the share of the Roma at a much higher level (6-8%).

Since 2014, the HCSO use the double identity question also on the Eurostat coordinated population surveys (e.g., EU-LFS, EU-SILC), which allows the users to benchmark the quality of life of the Roma against the overall population or other relevant social groups.

Table 5. Share of persons with ethnic minority background

Year	Share of persons with an ethnic minority background (%)	Share of persons identifying themselves as Roma (%)
1990	2.24	1.38

2001	4.34	2.02
2011	6.48	3.18
2016	6.36	3.16

Source: Own calculations based on Lajtai (2020) and HCSO Census, Microcensus.

#### (vi) Migration patterns

The number of immigrants to Hungary has been relatively low in the recent years, but the trend is increasing. The share of children aged 0-14 among immigrants is low (Table 6). The number of immigrants from low HDI countries is very low (while also increasing), indicating that most of these people come to Hungary from surrounding or nearby Eastern European countries, including those looking for employment opportunities. The latter reason became more important in the post-crisis period, when – also partly due to the increased emigration flow – a shortage in labour supply occurred (Hárs, 2020).

Table 6. Number of immigrant persons

Year	2013	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total immigration, all geopolitical entities	38,968	58,344	53,618	68,070	82,937
Countries other than EU, EFTA and Candidate countries, with low Human Development Index (HDI)	428	769	885	1,704	1,261
Total immigration, all geopolitical entities, aged 0-14	3,025	4,748	3,589	3,948	4,311
Countries other than EU, EFTA, and Candidate countries, with low Human Development Index (HDI), aged 0-14	36	65	69	251	119

Source: Eurostat Database (2020).

## 9.2 Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles, and children’s living arrangements

### (vii) Family household types

According to the 2016 Micro census (the most recent available data), 98% of Hungarians lived in private households. There was a decrease in the number of these private households from 4.8 million to 4 million (Monostori and Murinkó, 2018).

The above presented Eurostat figures provide a picture based on the economic status of children instead of their age. The share of one-adult households increased by 4 pps between 2010 and 2015 (Table 7). However, Monostori and Murinkó (2018) reports a decrease in the share of these households, based on the results of the 2016 Microcensus, as one of the main drivers of the decreasing trend in the number of households overall between 2011 and 2015 (Monostori and Murinkó, 2018: 177). Monostori and Murinkó (2018) consider this decrease as an important shift from the previously observed fragmentation of Hungarian households.

Another driver of this decrease was the increase in the share of couple-type households. This is not reflected in the Eurostat figures, which are on individual level, however Monostori and Murinkó (2018) report a slight change in their share among all household: 50.8% of all households in 2011 was based on a partnership, either with or without dependent children, which increased to 53.1% in 2016.

Table 7. Type of households as a % of total households

Year	2010	2015
Share of persons living in households with one adult (%)	29.3	33.5
Share of persons living in households with one adult with dependent children (%)	4.6	4.2
Share of persons living in households with two adults (%)	27.4	27.6
Share of persons living in households with two adults with dependent children (%)	22.3	20.1
Share of persons living in households with three or more adults (%)	9.2	8.8

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Share of persons living in households with three or more adults with dependent children (%)	7.3	5.7
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Source: Eurostat Database (2020).

*(viii) Marriage and divorce rates*

The enduring decrease in the number of marriages during the previous decades in Hungary reached a historical low in 2010: crude marriage rate of 3.6% and 67.2 divorces per 100 marriages (Table 8). There were 51,805 marriages in total in 2016 (based on Micro census), which represents a 46% increase compared to the figures of the 2011 Census (Murinkó and Rorh, 2018). According to Murinkó and Rohr (2018) this trend is not specifically Hungarian, other Central-Eastern European and Baltic countries are also affected. This trend is also reflected in the total marriage rate, which increased from 0.39 in 2011 to 0.66 in 2016; this latter figure showing that in 2016 a Hungarian woman had a 66% chance to get married during her lifetime (Murinkó and Rohr, 2018).

There was no important change in the number of divorces (22-25,000 per year) right after the political/systemic change, but similarly to marriages, there was an important shift in 2010. In this year there were close to 24,000 divorces, while in 2017 there were only about 18,600 divorces (Makay and Szabó, 2018). Accordingly, the crude marriage rate decreased from 2.4% in 2010 to 1.7% in 2018, while the number of divorces per 100 marriages from 67.2 in 2010 to only 36.6 in 2017. Additionally, there is an increase in the mean age of the divorce (Makay and Szabó, 2018).

Table 8. *Indicators of marriage*

Year	Crude marriage rate (%)	Crude Divorce rate (%)	Number of divorces per 100 marriages
2010	3.6	2.4	67.2
2015	4.7	2.1	44.0
2016	5.3	2.0	37.7

2017	5.2	1.9	36.6
2018	5.2	1.7	-

Source. Eurostat Database (2020).

The share of persons living in households with dependent children stayed stable between 2010 and 2015, forming 4-5% of all persons, according to Eurostat figures (Table 9). Relying on the number and share of households instead of individuals, Monostori and Murinkó (2018) highlight that one-parent households formed about one-fifth of all households with children in 2016, while one-fourth in 2011 (children defined as aged 24 or younger). The overwhelming majority of adults in one-parent households are women (86% in 2016).

Table 9. *Lone-parent families*

Year	Share of one parent households (one parent with at least one child aged 18 or younger, %)	Share of one-parent households (one parent with at least one child aged 23 or younger, %)
1990	7.5	12.5
2001	5.8	13.0
2011	6.2	14.5
2016	5.2	13.6

Source: Monostori and Murinkó (2018). *Source of the data:* HCSO Census and Micro census.

(ix) *New family forms such as same-sex couple households*

According to the Micro census, there were 2,731 same-sex couple relationships in Hungary in 2016. Out of these, 1,767 were couples formed by men and 964 by women. 8.1% of these relationships (220 in total) were registered (198 couples of men and 22 of women). Out of all same-sex couples, 681 lived together with at least one child.

(x) *Family structures and changes across social groups*

See Section 2 (i).

(xi) *Children and youth living in institutions*

The number of children receiving child protection service has been looking stable even since 2000, around 18,000 (Table 10). About half of them lived in institutions in 2010, while their number dropped to about 7,000 in a ten-year period, mainly due to the deinstitutionalization process (Ilinca et al., 2015; HCSO<sup>10</sup>).

Table 10. *Number of children receiving child protection service*

Year	Number of children (aged 0-17) receiving child protection service	Number of children and young adults living in institutions
2010	17,792	8,371
2015	20,271	8,098
2016	20,551	7,759
2017	20,948	7,842
2018	21,210	7,314
2019	20,876	7,072

Source. HCSO Statat Database.

(xii) *Children in out-of-home care such as foster care*

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xstadat/xstadat\\_eves/i\\_fsg013.html](http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xstadat/xstadat_eves/i_fsg013.html);  
[http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xstadat/xstadat\\_eves/i\\_fsg009.html](http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xstadat/xstadat_eves/i_fsg009.html)

According to HCSO figures<sup>11</sup>, the number of children in foster care increased relatively sharply between 2000 and 2019 (Table 11). In 2010, about 60% of out-of-home care placements were in foster care (Ilinca et al., 2015: 9).

Table 11. *Number of children and young adults in out-of-home care such as foster care*

Year	Number of children
2010	12,416
2015	14,486
2016	14,872
2017	15,257
2018	15,386
2019	15,526

Source. HCSO Stadat Database.

*(xiii) Home-based support*

Number of children in contact with family and child welfare services decreased overall between 2012 and 2018, especially in older (6-13, 14-17) age groups (Table 12). We cannot observe such an explicit trend among the youngest children (aged 0-2). The decreasing trend also characterizes those children who/whose families use special child welfare services. For the latter, the number of children involved in 2015 was only one-third of those in 2010.

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xstadat/xstadat\\_eves/i\\_fsg009.html](http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xstadat/xstadat_eves/i_fsg009.html)

Table 12. *Home-based support*

	2008	2010	2012	2015	2018
Number of children in contact with family and child welfare services (children aged 0-17)	-	-	145,324	133,707	103,711
Number of children in contact with family and child welfare services (children aged 0-2)	-	-	12,457	14,032	12,352
Number of children in contact with family and child welfare services (children aged 3-5)	-	-	19,045	19,131	16,685
Number of children in contact with family and child welfare services (children aged 6-13)	-	-	55,544	54,872	44,032
Number of children in contact with family and child welfare services (children aged 14-17)	-	-	58,278	45,672	30,672
Number of children using special child welfare services (e.g. school and hospital-based social work, street and residential district social work)	40,177	60,051	65,065	22,382	-

Source: HCSO (2012, 2015, 2018).

### 9.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare

#### (i) *Poverty rates*

When describing the poverty situation of Hungarian children, we provide benchmarks for the overall population and European children overall. In addition, besides EU-SILC data provided by Eurostat, we also include data collected by TÁRKI Social Research Institute. The reason for the latter is that we have consistent time series data from a single source back to a longer time period (1992-2015), as well as that some important research has been done using these data on the main factors affecting the poverty risk among Hungarian children. In all cases, children are considered as persons aged 0-17. The below text largely relies on Gábos and Tóth (2017).

According to the data from TÁRKI Monitor Household Survey, the risk of poverty among Hungarian children had already started to increase slowly in the second half of the 2000s (2005–9), after a long preceding period of slight ups and downs (Fábián et al., 2014). This was followed

by an acceleration of the process between 2009 and 2012 and a levelling thereafter (Gábos et al., 2015). The EU-SILC data shows a somewhat different pattern between 2005 and 2010: there is no indication of any change in the lower parts of the income distribution in this period (Fábián et al., 2014), but there is a significant increase (about 2.5 percentage points) between 2010 and 2013.

Children were among those hit hardest by the Great Recession: their relative income poverty risk increased against both the national average and the EU-27 child average. According to EU-SILC data, the at-risk-of-poverty rate among children increased by 5.8 percentage points between 2007 and 2014 (from 18.8 per cent to 24.6 per cent). While the risk of income poverty increased for the overall population as well in this period, the poverty dynamics among children was more than twice as strong as among all Hungarians.

The income poverty of Hungarian children decreased strongly in the post-crisis period: the at-risk-of-poverty rate had the value of 22.7 per cent in 2015, while only 13.8 per cent in 2018. We have no data from the TÁRKI Household Monitor Survey since 2015 to check for this striking trend. However, it should be emphasized that other indicators point to the fact that the improved poverty situation did not affect the most vulnerable. For example, the relative median at risk of poverty gap in the total population (22.3 per cent in 2014) increased in the latest years, from 16.7 per cent in 2017 to 28.9 per cent in 2019. This trend was similar, but more pronounced among children: the poverty gap increased from 14.2 per cent in 2017 to 32.2 per cent in 2019 (peaking at 36.9 per cent in 2018), according to Eurostat data.

The loss in real income and the weakened position of Hungarian families is reflected in the severe material deprivation rates: the value of this indicator rose by almost 11 percentage points (from 21.5 per cent to 32.4 per cent) between 2008 and 2014. Again, the difference vis-à-vis the European children's benchmark is striking: from 2008 onwards, rapidly increasing severe material deprivation rates in Hungary contrasted with slightly decreasing risks in the New Member States (Gábos and Tóth, 2017). The considerable increase in material deprivation rates is attributable to certain items of the list included in the material deprivation index, first and foremost the inability to face unexpected financial expenses. According to Eurostat figures, the incidence of this among households with dependent children increased twice: between 2005 and 2007—before the outbreak of the crisis—and then between 2007 and 2009 (after which it levelled off at close to 80 per cent). This suggests that the financial stress for Hungarian households started increasing even before the crisis, during the 'good times' (of income growth). Inability to afford to go on a one-week holiday had been consistently very high over the previous ten years, while other items improved up until 2008/9, but then worsened until 2013 (Gábos and Tóth, 2017).

In the post-crisis period, however, the severe material deprivation rate started to decrease rapidly, both among children and the overall population. Its value declined from 19.4 per cent in the overall population and 24.9 percent in children in 2015 to 10.1 per cent and 15.2 per cent, respectively in 2018.

The trend in the at-risk-of-poverty and social exclusion rate reflects what happened according to its components: at-risk-of-poverty rate, severe material deprivation rate (both described above) and living in very low work intensity household rate (increasing trend due to increased unemployment in the crisis period, and decreasing trend afterwards, due to the quick recovery in unemployment rates and to the expanding public work schemes). In the post-crisis period, the AROPE rate decreased from 28.2 per cent in 2015 to 18.9 per cent in 2018 in the overall population, while even more rapidly among children: from 36.1 per cent in 2015 to 23.8 per cent in 2018. While the risk of children is still higher compared to the overall population, the gap has been decreasing since the peak of the crisis. This indicator served as a target not only for the Europe 2002 Strategy, but also for the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy. In line with the most recent developments, this target was achieved by the end of 2010s.

As Gábos and Tóth (2017) highlight, in Hungary, the risk of poverty is strongly associated with a set of household level characteristics, and these prove to be stable over time (Gábos et al., 2015). While living in a family with children is in itself associated with an increased risk of living in poverty, other characteristics (such as household type, education, labour market attachment, settlement type, and ethnic background) are strong and reinforcing factors that also differentiate among people in respect of their risk of poverty (Ferge and Darvas, 2014; Gábos and Szivós, 2006; Gábos et al., 2015). Children with a high poverty risk are especially those in large families, living with a poorly educated household head, and in households with low or very low work intensity (Gábos et al., 2015; Gábos and Tóth, 2017). Further, geographical factors are also strongly associated with the risk of poverty and child poverty in Hungary (Blaskó, 2010): settlement type and region are both important, although there is a strong compositional effect (in terms of education and employment). Poverty is mainly a rural issue in Hungary: there is a clear gradient of the risk of poverty and child poverty according to the type of settlement in which a household lives; this gradient has been stable over the past two decades. In addition, rural areas and some regions are characterized by poor-quality infrastructure and limited access to both transport facilities and a range of services (most importantly childcare and schooling) (Darvas and Tausz, 2007; Bass et al., 2008).

Roma children are of particular interest in poverty research and social policy practice in Hungary. Although estimates are not totally reliable (due to the low share of the Roma in surveys), it is widely agreed that the poverty risk among the Roma is extremely high, not least

because poverty risk factors (severe underemployment, low education, large families, and place of residence) are seriously concentrated in the Roma population (Blaskó, 2010). Estimates based on TÁRKI data show that 35 per cent of Roma children were living below the poverty line in 2005. These figures increased to about 80 per cent by 2012, improving slightly thereafter (Gábos et al., 2015). Living in a Roma family increases the risk of poverty considerably, even when additional factors are controlled for (Gábos and Szivós, 2008). Other studies confirm that Roma at risk of poverty are more affected by extreme poverty than others (Bass et al., 2007; Ladányi, 2007). Roma children are also at high risk of intergenerational transmission of poverty, which is strongly related to their weak opportunities in the educational system (Janky, 2004; Kertesi and Kézdi, 2008).

Table 13. *Poverty among children aged 0-17*

	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018
AROP – overall population (%)	12.3	14.9	14.5	13.4	12.8
AROP – children (0-17, %)	20.3	22.7	19.9	14.8	13.8
Severe material deprivation rate – overall population (%)	21.6	19.4	16.2	14.5	10.1
Severe material deprivation rate – children (0-17, %)	28.8	24.9	21.1	19.2	15.2
At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate overall population (%)	29.9	28.2	26.3	25.6	19.6
At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate children (0-17, %)	38.7	36.1	33.6	31.6	23.8

Source. Eurostat Database (2020).

*(ii) Employment/unemployment rates*

Employment rates in Hungary prior to the Great Recession were low in comparison to both EU-15 and most of the Central and Eastern European countries. Only 60 per cent of the population

aged 20-64 was in employment in 2010 (Table 14); close to 10 percentage points lower compared to the EU-28 average (68.5 per cent) and also much lower than Austria (73.9 per cent), Czechia (70.4 per cent), Slovakia (64.6 per cent), and Poland (64.3 per cent). The conservative government - which came to power in 2010 and has been exercising executive power since - sharply turned to workfare, including a massive expansion of public work schemes, as well as a recalibration of the relationship between the minimum wage and the available social assistance (Gábos and Tóth, 2017). Furthermore, emigration also contributed to improved employment figures, as these were also counted in employment statistics. Finally, improvements in the primary labour market added to increased employment figures in the 2010s. As a result, employment rates increased after the Great Recession and reached a close to 70 per cent in 2015 and exceeded 75 per cent in 2019. The same trends can be observed for unemployment rates, which peaked in 2010-2011 well above 10 per cent, but then shrunk sharply to 6.8 in 2015, and further to 3.4 in 2019. Accordingly, Bakó and Lakatos (2020) wrote: "The labour market in 2018 was essentially characterized by surplus demand; the mobilizable labour force potential has shrunk significantly compared to that of the previous year. In this context, public employment quotas have been further reduced by the government in order to encourage those formerly working in this manner to enter the primary labour market instead. The expansion of the number of those in employment continued in 2018, however, the rate of the expansion was slower than that of the previous two years." In respect with the COVID-19 situation, they also highlighted that "As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that appeared in Hungary in March 2020, the favourable labour market processes were spectacularly broken. The average monthly number of persons employed was already 56 thousand less in March than in the previous month and 22 thousand less than in March of the previous year." (Bakó and Lakatos, 2020).

Table 14. *Employment and unemployment rates*

Year	Employment rate (persons aged 15-64, %)	Employment rate (persons aged 20-64, %)	Unemployment rate (persons aged 15-74, %)
2010	54.9	59.9	11.2
2015	63.9	68.9	6.8
2016	66.5	71.5	5.1

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2017	68.2	73.3	4.2
2018	69.2	74.4	3.7
2019	-	75.3	3.4

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Source: Eurostat Database (2020).

*(iii) Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage related to gender, age, ethnicity, migrant status and other social dimensions*

The employment gap between males and females in Hungary was slightly below the EU-28 average at the start of the Great Recession (12.5 pps in 2009 and 10.9 pps in 2010; see Table 15). This gap, however, has started to increase since 2009/2010, reaching a 15.5 percentage points value by 2019. Interestingly, this trend developed in contrast with what has been observed in the European Union on average, where this gap narrowed from 13 pps in 2010 to 11.4 pps in 2019. This trend suggests that Hungarian women were severely affected by the changes in the labour market due to the effects of the crisis.

Part-time employment is low in Hungary (as in most Central and Eastern European countries), in a European comparison. At the same time, as Eurostat data suggest, the part-time employment gap in part-time arrangements between women and men is also very low: in 2010 the part-time employment rate among females was 4 pps higher than among men, while in the EU-28 on average the same figure is close to 24 pps. The gender gap in part-time employment was fairly stable in the last decade in Hungary.

The gender pay gap in Hungary was 17.6 per cent in 2010. This gap decreased to a fairly large extent to 12 per cent in 2018. While the figure in 2010 was slightly above the EU-28 average (17.1), in 2018 the Hungarian gender pay gap in unadjusted form was lower the EU-28 benchmark (15.7 per cent).

Vulnerable social groups face a strong disadvantage on the labour market in Hungary. The employment rate among persons with primary education or lower is only half of the average, although this gap is narrowing: 0.46 in 2010 and 0.57 in 2017 (TÁRKI, 2018). A similarly wide gap in employment characterized the situation of the Roma in 2010 (0.45), who also experienced an improvement in their labour market position until 2017, when their employment rate was two-thirds of the Hungarian average (TÁRKI, 2018). The increased employment rates among the members of these disadvantaged groups can be largely attributed to the expanding

public work schemes, in many cases at the expense of early school leaving among the Roma youth.

Table 15. *Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage related to gender, age, ethnicity, migrant status, and other social dimensions*

	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
GEG (pps)	10.9	13.7	14.0	15.3	15.3	15.5
GEG_PT (pps)	4.0	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.7	4.3
GEG - unadjusted (% of average gross hourly earnings of men)	17.6	14.0	14.0	14.0	12.2	
GEMPL_LE	0.46	0.53	0.55	0.57	-	-
GEMPL_Roma	0.45	0.61	0.67	0.66	-	-

*Notes.*

GEG – Gender employment gap. The difference between the share of part-time employment in total employment of women and men aged 20-64. Source: EU-LFS; <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tesem060&plugin=1>

GEG\_PT – Gender employment gap in part-time employment. The difference between the share of part-time employment in total employment of women and men aged 20-64. Source: EU-LFS.

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tepsr\\_lm210&plugin=1](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tepsr_lm210&plugin=1)

GEG - unadjusted – Gender pay gap in unadjusted form. The difference between average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees and of female paid employees as a percentage of average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees.

GEMPL\_LE – The risk of being in employment among low-educated persons compared to average. Source: own calculations based on HCSO data. See: TÁRKI (2018).

GEMPL\_Roma – The risk of being in employment among the Roma compared to average. Source: own calculations based on HCSO data. See: TÁRKI (2018).

*(iv) Patterns of education disadvantage*

At age 15, Hungarian children performed below OECD average in reading, mathematics and science, according to the latest OECD PISA results from 2018 (OECD, 2019). Although the mean score points increased since 2012 and 2015, the relative position of the country and the indicators based on the share of low performers in competency domains did not improve. About one-fourth of Hungarian children aged 15 are low achievers in reading and mathematics. In addition, Hungary also underperforms in the field of digital literacy, which has been recently introduced as an additional competence to monitor (Lannert, 2018).

While the Hungarian school system performs below average or near the average in terms of competency outcomes, the country is among the worst performers in Europe when it comes to the role of family background in explaining inequalities in these outcomes. This holds for all OECD PISA waves since the 2000s (OECD, 2019). Socio-economically advantaged students outperformed disadvantaged students in reading by 113 score points in PISA 2018, which is larger than the average difference between the two groups (89 score points) across OECD countries. In PISA 2009, the performance gap related to socioeconomic status was 118 score points in Hungary (and 87 score points on average across OECD countries). Socio-economic status was a strong predictor of performance in mathematics and science in all PISA participating countries, however, in Hungary, it explained 24% of the variation in mathematics performance in PISA 2018 compared to 14% on average across OECD countries, and 21% of the variation in science performance, compared to the OECD average of 13% of the variation. Low- and high-performing students are clustered in the same schools more often than the OECD average (OECD, 2019). Main institutional factors behind this are related to the high level of selectivity and of segregation in the Hungarian education system.

The Hungarian Competence Survey; which is conducted among all pupils at grades 6, 8 and 10; also provides a reach database to evaluate education outcomes (in reading, mathematics and science) and inequalities in them. According to these data, children of mothers with primary education or lower perform much worse in all fields than their counterparts from mothers with secondary and tertiary education. Within the period between 2010 and 2016, the share of children from the former group is 2-2.5 times higher among pupils with low performance in reading and mathematics than the average (TÁRKI, 2018). These differences by family background persist in adulthood, too, as highlighted by Lannert and Holb (2020), based on the analysis of the PIAAC data.

Table 16. *Early School Leaver's rate (18 to 24 years)*

	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Early School Leaver's rate (18-24 years, %)	10.7	11.6	12.4	12.5	12.6	11.8
Life-long learning Indicator (25-64 years, %)	3.0	7.1	6.3	6.2	6.0	5.8
Tertiary educational attainment (30-34 years, %)	26.1	34.3	33.0	32.1	33.7	33.4

Source. Eurostat Database (2020).

(v) *Major social welfare trends such as disadvantage risks, welfare benefit receipt levels*

See 3 (i).

(vi) *Housing problems*

Overcrowding rate is high in Hungary in a European comparison, similarly to other Central and Eastern European countries. Close to half of the overall population lived in 2010 in a flat/house that was overcrowded, but the same figure was about the two-third of children aged 0-17 in the same year. The overcrowding rate more than halved between 2010 and 2018, both in the overall population and among children (Table 17).

About one in ten Hungarians face severe problems when comes to housing cost. The housing cost overburden rate is similar among children and stayed fairly stable in the last decade: 11.9 per cent in 2010, 8.2 per cent in 2015 and 9.2 per cent in 2018.

Table 17. *Housing indicators*

	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018
Overcrowding rate – overall population (%)	47.2	41.1	40.4	40.5	20.1
Overcrowding rate – children (0-17, %)	66.5	62.6	62.3	62.7	35.6

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Housing cost over burden rate (%)	11.3	8.5	8.8	10.7	9.6
Housing cost over burden rate – children (0-17, %)	11.9	8.2	9.1	10.2	9.3

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Source. Eurostat Database (2020).

*Summary: The broader socio-economic context and trends which influences children's, parental and family circumstances and environments*

While the income poverty rate, as well as poverty and social exclusion rate, are decreasing in Hungary since the peak observed in 2013, the depth of poverty is increasing during the last few years. This indicates that the recovery after the Great Recession benefited the middle and lower middle classes, while the most in need – despite the improvement in their absolute income position – could not manage to escape poverty (Branyiczki and Gábos, 2019). Children and families with children in general, are at a higher-than-average risk. Especially lone-parent families and large families are affected. Other socio-economic factors strongly shape these risks: low education, low work intensity, settlement type, and residential segregation.

Roma ethnicity often exposed to most or all of these and therefore, they face multiple disadvantages and also high risk of intergenerational transmission of poverty. The selectivity of the Hungarian educational system and the school segregation are the main institutional mechanisms of lower levels of social integration among the Roma, but the deficits of the educational system have a much larger negative effect among younger generations.

The economic and social policy system turned sharply to workfare (largely by the expansion of public work schemes) and the elimination of perceived unemployment traps (by strong cutback in social assistance) with the landslide victory of the conservative government in 2010, after two decades of political business cycles (alternation of governments of different colour). These developments contributed to a historically low unemployment rate on one hand, and increasing depth of poverty on the other hand.

#### **9.4 The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions and actors' which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision**

(i) *Membership to the EU; YES*

(ii) *Relationship with European Union*

Hungary is a full member of the European Union since 1st of May 2004 and such, member of all EU institutions. Hungary took over the EU Council presidency for the first half of 2011, following Belgium and preceding Poland. The priorities of the Presidency were related to: (i) growth and employment for preserving the European social model; (ii) stronger Europe in the fields of food, energy and water; (iii) citizen friendly Union; and (iv) enlargement and neighbourhood policy. In the field of social policy, the Hungarian presidency pushed for the adoption of the EU Framework for the National Roma Integration Strategy with the aim to close the gap between Roma and non-Roma in the key policy areas of education, employment, housing and health, as well as to protect Roma against discrimination.

While the support of the EU membership is high in Hungary (61% reporting in a 2019 Eurobarometer poll that the country's EU membership is a good), since 2010 a growing tension emerged between the Hungarian government and the EU political institutions. This became explicit in relation with the rule of law in Hungary, which culminated in the launch of the procedure to implement Article 7(1), claiming the existence of a clear risk of a serious breach by Hungary of the values on which the Union is founded. The conflict is also present in the field of migration policy, including ongoing infringement procedure against Hungary over the legislation regarding refugees and asylum seekers. Another infringement procedure against Hungary is over the segregation of Roma children in schools.

*(iii) Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy*

Until recently, the Ministry of Human Capacities (MHC, before 2010: Ministry of Social Affairs) was responsible for family policy, social policy, and social services, as well as for other sectors like education, health, culture, etc. The use of European development resources (e.g., European Social Fund) related to this field was also part of the portfolio.

The Ministry of Human Capacities supervises the Directorate-General for Social Affairs and Child Protection, which is responsible for tasks related to sustaining and running institutions regulated by the law of social administration and social policy, as well as on child protection (care for disabled persons, foster care, penitentiary, etc.). Kindergartens, schools and some other types of institutional care for children are controlled by the State Secretariat of Education within the Ministry of Human Capacities. Institutions in the field of childcare (for children aged under three) are run by local governments, private arrangements, churches, and have until recently been controlled by the State Secretariat for Family and Youth Affairs within the Ministry of Human Capacities. The latter is also responsible both for the Kopp Mária Institute for Demography and Families, and for the Family Friendly Country non-profit Public Benefit Ltd., as background institutions.

Since May 2019, the social inclusion area moved to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, while a separate ministry without portfolio is now responsible for the living standards of families (since September 2020). Social assistance and social services still belong to the Ministry of Human Capacities.

The State Secretariat for Social Inclusion is responsible for Sure Start institutions (Biztos Kezdet Gyerekház) and for extracurricular special schools for children with special need (Tanoda). From 2013, these two types of institutions are part of the child welfare basic services, are regulated by the Act on child protection (XXXI/1997) and are financed from the central budget (previously funded by the European development funds). Background institution: General Directorate for Social Inclusion (Társadalmi Esélyteremtési Főigazgatóság).

*(iv) Influential lobbying groups*

There are some organizations that involve professionals in the field of family support, child welfare, and child protection: Hungarian Child Welfare Association (Magyar Családsegítő és Gyermekjóléti Szolgálatok Országos Egyesülete - MACSGYOE), Rubeus Association (Rubeus Egyesület), Union of the Social Professional Organisations (Szociális Szakmai Szövetség – 3Sz).

Further, there are other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) focusing on families, specific types of families, and family related issues in Hungary.

National Association of Large Families (Nagycsaládosok Országos Egyesülete). The organization is part of the Monitoring Committee of the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy.

Single Parent Club Foundation (Egyedülálló Szülők Klubja Alapítvány). The organization is part of the Monitoring Committee of the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy.

Various organizations related to the main churches (Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran, Greek-Catholic, etc.) in Hungary, are also involved. Overall, these organizations are strongly supported to provide social services (mainly in health care, long-term care, but also in education). Specifically, and for a long time, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta plays an important role both by running its own projects, but also by participating in the implementation of state-financed social services and in running other complex social policy programmes. They are also implementing one of the most important programs that has been recently launched by the government: a diagnosis-based comprehensive social inclusion programme targeting the less developed 300 settlements in Hungary, populated to a large extent by the Roma. Next to

the State Secretary/Deputy State Secretary in charge of the implementation of the strategy, they provide the co-chair for the monitoring committee of the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy. Among organizations related to churches we can also list: Ökumenikus Segélyszervezet, Katolikus Karitás, Magyar Református Szeretetszolgálat, and Baptista Szeretetszolgálat.

There are organizations involved in promoting the rights of the child and monitoring their emergence in Hungary, such as Helsinki Watch, Civil Rights NGO Coalition (Gyermekjogi Civil Koalíció), and Hintalovon Child Rights Foundation.

*(v) Influential policy/research networks*

In the field of family policy: Kopp Mária Institute for Demography and Families is the background institute for the Ministry of Human Capacities (changes may take place with the recent switch of this field to a ministry without portfolio – see above) in this field. The institute is also part of the monitoring committee of the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy. In terms of academic achievements and policy evaluation, however, the Demographic Research Institute is the key player. Both institutes are part of the monitoring committee of the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy.

In addition, the Institute of Economics of the Centre for Economic and Regional Studies (also part of the monitoring committee of the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy) and the Centre for Social Sciences (both members of the network of research institutes of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences until recently, now part of the Eötvös Lóránt Research Network) are also influential members of the Hungarian research network in this field. Within the frame of the Centre for Social Sciences, the Child Opportunities Research Group (CORG) is operating. CORG is the research pillar of a consortium comprised of a government organization (DG of Social Affairs and Child Protection) and an NGO (Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta). It conducts basic and applied, policy-oriented research. The group is also member of the monitoring committee of the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy.

Many universities have departments of social policy and social work, which are also involved in research.

As private research institutes, the Budapest Institute, Hétfő Research Institute and TÁRKI Social Research Institute (the latter also member of the monitoring committee of the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy) are also part of the main research entities and provide (academic, as well as policy evaluation) expertise in the fields of family and social policy evaluation to the central government, to the local government and other bodies, both at a national and international level.

*(vi) The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support*

Hungary is a parliamentary republic with the prime minister being the head of the government and exercising executive power. The president's role is mainly representative. Since 2010, the ruling party (FIDESZ – Hungarian Civic Alliance) has a two-thirds majority in the Parliament (National Assembly). Exploiting this opportunity, the governmental majority introduced a new constitutional law in 2012. Hungary is divided into seven regions (NUTS-2, including Budapest) and 19 counties plus Budapest. Due to this majority of the ruling party in the Parliament, there is no need for intensive negotiations between parties to introduce new laws and regulations. More importantly, since 2010, policy priorities and main decisions are made at the level of the Prime Minister and the office of the Prime Minister.

*(vii) The democratic system and main political parties; unitary vs federal state structures; centralised vs decentralised structures*

Following the free parliamentary elections in 1990, six parties succeeded to get a seat in the National Assembly, including FIDESZ and the former communist party (renamed as Hungarian Socialist Party). These two parties are still part of the National Assembly, while the composition of the Parliament has been changing continuously. Since 2010, FIDESZ has more than two-thirds of the seats in each election, which allows them full control of both the legislative and executive power. They mostly control the majority of the local governments as well, with the exception of Budapest (recently, from 2019) and some other cities and towns. List of parties that are members of the actual National Assembly (in 2020, last general elections: 2018): FIDESZ – Magyar Polgári Szövetség (FIDESZ – Hungarian Civil Alliance), Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom (Movement for a Better Hungary), Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt (Christian Democratic People's Party), Magyar Szocialista Párt (Hungarian Socialist Party), Demokratikus Koalíció (Democratic Coalition), Lehet Más a Politika (Politics Can Be Different), Mi Hazánk Mozgalom (Our Homeland Movement), Párbeszéd Magyarországért (Dialogue for Hungary), Magyar Liberális Párt (Hungarian Liberal Party), Magyarországi Németek Országos Önkormányzata (National Self-Government of Germans in Hungary). FIDESZ and Christian Democratic People's Party form an alliance and provide the governmental majority. In addition, Momentum Movement got seats in the last European Parliamentary elections (2019).

In Hungary, intermediary levels of government (regions – NUTS-2, counties – NUTS-3) do have less discretion, decisions, and implementation in the field of family policy; childcare and child welfare take place either at central or local governmental level. In some cases, seats (LAU-1 level) are also involved: since 2016, when an institutional reform was implemented, family and child welfare centres (see below) were constituted in each seat center (197 in total, while only 40 before the changes) (see for example Kopasz, 2017).

*(viii) The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular (e.g., Ministry roles, national vs local/regional government roles)*

Family policy, understood here as the portfolio of care leave policies, related cash transfers (e.g. childcare fee, childcare allowance) and other family-related cash benefits (e.g. family allowance, family tax benefits) and services, is under the control of the central government (State Secretariat of Family and Youth Affairs of the Ministry of Human Capacities; from September 2020 ministry without portfolio) and is financed from taxes and social security contributions. The disbursement of benefits is administered by the Hungarian State Treasury (previously by the Central Administration of Social Security). The benefits of the Hungarian family policy system are regulated by the Act LXXXIV on the support of families from 1998.

The regulation of social services, including family support and child welfare (including childcare services), was laid down by the Social Act (from 1993). According to this, the state provided financial resources (from taxes) and regulatory framework, while local governments provided services according to local needs (Czibere and Mester, 2020). The regulation also encouraged the involvement of state-owned, church-related, civil and private actors in providing these services. This involvement of churches was increasing in time, with more speed during conservative government than in time of socialist government. Since 2010, this involvement is quickly expanding, not only in the field of social services, but also in others, like education (Fejes and Szűcs, 2018). Overall, step-by-step, an expansion in needs resulted in a complex and multi-actor system of social services (Czibere and Mester, 2020).

*(ix) The ways in and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policymaking and reviews*

In Hungary, families are usually not directly involved in policymaking and reviews. Relevant ministries and state secretariats are responsible to design and implement strategies. Usually, governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, and experts are involved in the preparation of such documents (e.g., the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy), but sometimes only as part of the so-called social consultation. Organizations of families, parents, and professionals may take part in the process. Informally, lobby groups may be involved from the very beginning of the process.

Since 2019, UNICEF Hungary coordinates the Child Rights NGO Coalition (including 18 organizations and experts) to monitor the emergence of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Hungary. Their first report was launched in November 2019.

### 9.5 List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year 2000. For each policy document indicate

(i) *Whether participation of families and young people has been mentioned in the document*

Strategies in the fields related to family support.

- Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy (HNSIS) 2011-2020, adopted in 2011 and revised in 2015. The Strategy is considered an integrated strategy, as it builds on and includes already existing strategies at that time: the Let's Make Things Better for Our Children Strategy 2007-2030 strategy, the Decade of Roma Inclusion Programme Strategic Plan, and the (officially not accepted as a strategical document) programme for the inclusion of the most disadvantaged small areas (LAU-1 at the time of the adoption of the first version of the HNSIS, replaced by seats since 2013). The implementation of the strategy involved the use of European development funds from the periods of both 2007-2013 and 2014-2020.
- Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy (HNSIS) 2030. This is the strategical document that serves to carry further the Hungarian government's objectives in the field of social inclusion (including child welfare, labour market, education, health, and housing). The process of adopting the document is ongoing and the Strategy is expected to come into effect still in this year.
- Let's Make Things Better for Our Children Strategy, 2007-2030 (Legyen Jobb a Gyermekeknek Nemzeti Stratégia 2007-2030), adopted in 2007. In 2011, became part of the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy.
- Government Decree on the long-term program of the catching up settlements (Kormányhatározat a „Felzárkózó települések” hosszú távú programjának megalapozásáról, 1404/2019 (VII.5.)
- Proposal for National Social Policy Strategy, prepared in 2011 (by Czibere, K., I. Sziklai, D. Mester, Dr. Gy. Vörös, F. Sidlovics, J. Skultéti and A. Beszterczey).
- Manuscript, not adopted formally by the Hungarian government. It includes, however, proposals that are in line with the changes implemented in the Hungarian child welfare system in 2016.

(ii) *The extent to which such participation has been implemented*

In strategic documents concerning family policy and social inclusion, families and/or young people in Hungary are involved indirectly, via non-governmental organizations representing their

interests. Among them, the Organization of Large Families and the Single Parent Club Foundation (as well as the main churches) have the largest influence, by participating and lobbying during the decision-making process concerning family policy.

### **9.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services:**

#### *(i) The priorities in child welfare and family policy*

According to the Family protection act (CCXI/2011), the family is the basic unit of the society and the main resource of the nation. The law also expresses that the development of the child is best assured within a stable family, based on marriage, and the sound relationship between the mother and the father. Moreover, according to the document, the birth of a child should not result in the family falling in poverty, and that the state should enhance the balance between work and family life.

Family policy in Hungary is traditionally focused on increasing fertility, due to the fact that falling fertility rates concerned the intellectual and political elite back to the 1920-30s. This is very much emphasized by the conservative government in place since 2010 (and also during their first term between 1998 and 2002), with a family support system that has a strong preference to increase fertility among middle class families (see below). Contrarily, socialist and liberal governments (1994-1998, 2002-2010) focused their family policy on poverty alleviation.

According to the Child Protection Act (XXXI/1997), the main aim of the child welfare services in Hungary is to ensure the physical, mental, emotional, and moral development of children, as well as their well-being. It also highlights the primary importance of children's development within their family, but also the prevention and cessation of their endangerment, including the prevention of being removed from their families. When the latter happens due to the family circumstances that may endanger the development and safety of the child, the child is treated within the institutional frame of the child protection services (e.g., foster parents, shelter care).

#### *(ii) The main types of family provision and support and key features (e.g., different types of cash support (universal and targeted, work-family reconciliation measures and children's/family services, childcare etc.)*

**Family support benefits** in Hungary form a fairly complex system of cash provisions. Here are the most important benefits.

The first set of benefits are related to maternity and parental leave arrangements (childcare benefits). This information is based on Gábos and Makay (2020).

*Infant care allowance (csecsemőgondozási díj – CSED).* Benefit provided during maternal leave (24 weeks: up to four weeks prior to birth). Employment related. 70 per cent of actual average daily earning, with no upper limit on payments. In case of paternity leave (5 days), 100 per cent of father's average daily wage, with no upper limit on payments. Is treated as gross income, and taxed at 15%.

*Childcare fee (gyermekgondozási díj - GYED).* Benefit provided during parental leave, from the end of the Maternity leave period until the child's second birthday, for insured parents. 70 per cent of average daily earnings calculated for the last 180 days prior to the birth, up to a limit of 70 per cent of twice the minimum daily wage (HUF161,000<sup>12</sup> per month; the amount of the benefit is a maximum of HUF225,288). This is a gross amount: income tax and pension contribution are deducted, but family tax credit can be applied. A parent taking GYED can work unlimited hours after the child turns six months old, while still receiving the full benefit until the child's second birthday (GYED extra).

*Childcare allowance (gyermekgondozást segítő ellátás - GYES).* Universal benefit. From the end of GYED (child's second birthday) until the child's third birthday, for insured parents. From birth until the child's third birthday for parents who are not insured until the child's third birthday, a flat rate benefit equal to the amount of the minimum pension, HUF28,500 per month in 2020. This is a gross amount from which pension contribution is deducted. A parent taking GYES cannot work until the child is six months old, but can then work unlimited hours while still receiving the full benefit until the child's third birthday.

*Child home care fee (Gyermekek otthongondozási díja – GYOD).* Was introduced in 2019 for parents caring for a child facing long-term illness or disability. The benefit is provided regardless of the age of the child. The gross amount of the benefit is HUF123,910 per month in 2020.

*Sick pay on child nursing (gyermekápolási táppénz)* is part of the sick-pay system, the length of which depends on the age of the child: under one year, unlimited; 12 to 35 months, up to 84 days per child per year; 36 to 71 months, 42 days; and six to 12 years, 14 days. Single

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<sup>12</sup> €465.86, according to the Conversion of currency undertaken for 31 July 2020, using: <https://www1.oanda.com/currency/converter/> (€1=HUF345.6).

parents are entitled to a double period of leave. Leave is a family entitlement and sickness benefit is paid at 50 or 60 per cent of actual earnings up to a limit.

There are other benefits, also part either of the family support system or of the social policy system, not related to the leave system:

*Maternity benefit (anyasági támogatás).* Universal lump-sum benefit at the birth of the child, but conditioned on regular health check during pregnancy. Its amount is the 150% of that of the minimum pension, HUF64,125.

*Child-raising support (Gyermeknevelési támogatás – GYET).* Parents raising at least three children (the youngest should be between age 3 and 8) are eligible. The person receiving the benefit is allowed to work for a maximum of 30 hours per week. The amount of the benefit is equal to that of the minimum pension, HUF28,500 [€82.47] per month in 2020.

*Family allowance (családi pótlék).* Universal benefit, but conditioned on school attendance. The amount of the benefit is differentiated by the number of children in the family, by the number of parents and by the health condition of the child. The amount of the benefit in 2020 is HUF12,200 for one child, HUF13,300 per child for two children, HUF14,800 per child for three or more children. Slightly higher amounts are eligible when there is only one parent in the family, while the amount is about double when the child suffer from long-term illness or disability.

*Family tax allowance (családi adókedvezmény).* The benefit amount is HUF10,000 for 1 child per months, HUF20,000 per child for 2 children per month and HUF33,000 per child for 3 or more children per month. Since 2010, this is the most important element of the family support system, the amount of the tax allowance being increased gradually since then. The total expenditure on tax allowance has been HUF350 billion in 2019, higher now than for family allowance (about HUF300 billion).

*Regular child protection benefit (rendszeres gyermekvédelmi kedvezmény – RGyK).* Means-tested benefit. While its actual amount is fairly low (about HUF6,500 per month), but important in-kind benefits (free school meals, school starting vouchers, etc.) are attached to its eligibility.

In addition, during the recent years there is an expanding set of benefits that advantages families with children, mainly in the field of housing. Often, these are loans offered to families with children, which cannot be taken up, however, by the most vulnerable.

**Child welfare services.** According to the Child Protection Act (XXXI/1997), besides benefits in cash and in-kind (see above), basic child welfare services are also part of the child

protection system. There was an important structural change in the provision of services in 2016. The family support (*családsegítő szolgálat*) and the child welfare (*gyermekjóléti szolgálat*) services were integrated. At the same time, institutionally two organizations were created (see below), with different responsibilities, aiming to separate duties related to support from those related to authorities (Kopasz, 2016). The description below refers to the actual status of services.

*Child welfare service.* This service is supplied by two institutional arrangements.

The family and child welfare service is run by municipalities, and aims to provide help for all children and families in need who face social or mental crisis. The following services should be provided: social, mental hygiene and life conduct guidance, individual and group therapy programs with the aim of community development. In addition, the services also run and coordinate the so-called child welfare warning system that involves several professionals and organizations in the field of social assistance, health, education, police, etc.

The family and child welfare centres are run by seats (LAU-1 level) and deal with authority measures in the field of child protection. Additionally, they provide professional support to the family and child welfare services. A warning system is also set up at seat level.

*Temporary care of children.* Includes substitute parent (fixed-term service, contracted by family and child service and/or centre), temporary shelter for children, temporary shelter for families.

*Daily childcare provisions.* In Hungary, early childhood education and care (ECEC) is provided for children under school age. The ECEC system in Hungary is bisectoral: childcare is provided by nurseries (nursery, mini-nursery, workplace nursery, home-based family nursery – with structural change since January 2016) for children under the age of three, while early childhood education for children aged 3-6/7 by kindergartens. The Hungarian ECEC system is not only split by the age of the child, but the two pillars also belong to two different welfare state sub-systems: nurseries belong to child welfare services, while kindergartens represent the first stage of public education. Kindergartens provide institutional full-day care for 3- to 6-year-old children. Since 2015, 20 weekly hours attendance in ECEC (óvoda/kindergarten) from three years of age is compulsory (for at least four hours per day).

One of the aims of the ECEC system in place is to help parents to participate in the labour market. According to the strategic objectives formulated by the conservative government (in place since 2010), non-standard form of employment among mothers are promoted in Hungary, together with important changes in family policy, including the role of ECEC in this respect. Between 2014 and 2017, as a result of the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the

employment of women significantly increased compared to other countries (by 8.5%). This trend was accompanied by the systematic development of early childhood education provision (Eurydice 2019).

*Sure Start houses* are part of the child welfare services system since 2013. Provides services related to child development and parental competencies for families and children in socially disadvantaged situations. In the beginning, these services were provided for pre-school aged children, but since the kindergarten attendance has been made compulsory since 2015/2016, the *Sure Start houses* only deal with children aged 0-2.

Other services also contribute to a large extent to the development of children and to the support of parents in best fulfilling their roles. Among these, we can list the following:

The *network of district nurses (védőnői hálózat)*. Internationally unique service. District nurses work in strong cooperation with members of other fields (health, education, social assistance). Follow each child from the early stage of the pregnancy until their school start. Provides support to parents in various fields and perform regular controls on the physical and mental development of the child.

*Education counselling service*. Run by pedagogical professional services (regulated by the Act CXCV/2011) and provides counselling in the field of child development related to their educational path.

*(iii) The types of funding involved such as state, charity vs private sector providers and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners*

Funding for family policy and child welfare policy is provided by the state. Charities, churches, and the private sector play only a marginal role in funding family support. The cash transfers to families are funded by the national budget, from taxes and social security contributions. Child welfare services are provided by municipalities, seats (since March 2015), the state and a number of non-governmental non-profit organisations (NGOs) and individuals. A range of programmes that aim to develop or improve services related to child welfare are funded through the European Social Fund, mediated by the Ministry of Human Capacities and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In some cases, after a first period of implementation, the funding of these developments has been switched to the central budget (e.g., *Sure Start houses*).

*(iv) Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations*

Monitoring and policy evaluation in the field of social policy is far from being systematic in Hungary. Often, while a programme is implemented or upscaled, it is not underpinned by a programme evaluation.

There are some mixed and positive signs, too. The Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy has a monitoring system (TÁRKI, 2012) and a monitoring committee formed by governmental, non-governmental, and academic members is also part of the setting. Regular monitoring reports are prepared on the macro-level trends within the scope of the strategy (e.g., TÁRKI, 2014, 2018). As a result of a later change in the monitoring system, however, output indicators now dominate outcome measures.

The use of European Funds is also monitored. The evaluation process, required by the European Commission, is coordinated by the Ministry of Information and Technology. The evaluation aimed to explore how and to what extent the developments supported by the Operational Programmes of the 2014-2020 period contributed to the implementation of the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy (hereafter HNSIS or Strategy), to the improvement of living conditions and social positions of disadvantaged target groups, and to a better access to quality service (Kopint-Tárki, TÁRKI and GKI 2020).

At the level of programmes, for example in the case of the Sure Start houses programme, the input measurement was carried out (Surányi 2009), but the outcome measurement was not. The programme was extended/upscaled and switched to the central budget (earlier financed by the European development funds) without its cost-effectiveness being evaluated in an earlier stage (although an impact evaluation and an estimate of its cost-effectiveness based on British inputs was carried out, e.g., T-Tudok, 2015; Hétfá, 2016). Other similar programmes did not even reach this stage in terms of evaluation.

*(v) Limitations in national and official data and statistics*

Overall, the data infrastructure in Hungary is well developed. The country participates in all major data collections coordinated by Eurostat, which makes possible to analyse social trends in overall population and major subgroups. As a good practice, the HCSO introduced a double variable on national and ethnical identity on the non-compulsory population surveys (first on the national EU-LFS survey as a pilot in 2013, and on the others since 2014). This allows the monitoring of the quality of life of the Roma. In the last years, a better use of registry data is enhanced by initiatives to link them together.

Data collections and the provision of good indicators is much scattered when services related to family support, child welfare and child protection are concerned. These data allow for producing input and output indicators, but the outcome of services and processes cannot be assessed on this basis.

## **9.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision**

(i) *What are the pressing policy, practice and research challenges impeding developments?*

*Policy challenges*

*Family policy.* The risk of poverty of families with children has been higher than average since the political changes in 1990. During the last years, this gap has diminished considerably and among many factors, this is also a result of increased family policy expenditure since 2010. Giving priority to employment-related benefits instead of universal and means-tested ones are at the heart of the changes in family policy and of the welfare state in general since 2010. There are, however, other indicators and research evidence that provides a complementary picture: the situation of the most vulnerable is worsening in relative terms. The poverty gap has been increasing since 2017, and it also appears that decreasing poverty affected in first place middle and low middle-class families (Branyiczki and Gábos, 2018). Some scholars highlight the role of the family policy of the conservative government in power since 2010. Szikra (2018:9) writes that the second (2010-2014) and third (2014-2018) Orbán government: “abandoned both the procedural and the essential elements of the democratically defined welfare state”. Procedural elements refer to parliamentary debates and voting, as well as to widespread public consultation involving social partners, civil society stakeholders and experts, while essential elements to the welfare state’s commitment to the well-being of citizens and its aim to protect the most vulnerable social groups from extreme poverty and hardship (Szikra, 2018: 9).

*Social assistance.* There have been important changes in the social assistance system during the last decade. The conservative government turned sharply to increase employment in 2010. In achieving their objectives, they relied very extensively on public work schemes. Parallel to that, the government transformed unemployment benefits by curbing entitlements significantly to encourage job-seeking, activate long-term unemployed and overall, increase labour supply. Also, the social assistance system has been directly affected by the 2015 reform. The system of benefits was more clearly split in regular, income replacement benefits managed by the seats (*járás*, LAU-1 level) and social benefits managed by the local governments. These changes were a step further towards activation and increased conditionality. By putting a strong emphasis on public work, the income situation of individuals belonging to the most vulnerable social groups have both improved (due to increased income) and become more unstable at the same time (due to the retrenchment of provisions that worked as automatic stabilizers previously).

*Education.* While the Hungarian school system performs below average or near the average in terms of competency outcomes, the country is among the worst performers in Europe when it comes to the role of family background in explaining inequalities in these outcomes.

Main institutional factors behind this are related to the high level of selectivity and segregation in the Hungarian education system.

### *Practice challenges*

While the institutional setting in family support and child welfare provisions is in place, the level of financial resources and – to a large extent as a consequence – shortage in both the quantity and the quality of the human resources in the field, are definite obstacles in providing quality services (Kopasz 2016). The 2016 reform did not pass without tensions and received mixed reactions from professionals. Regional disparities in these provisions are also alarming.

### *Research challenges*

1. The most important issues in the field of research related to social services in Hungary is the low reliance on evidence-based policymaking within the government and other organizations responsible in the field. Both ex-ante and ex-post evaluations are scarce and far from being considered as in-built features in the decision-making process.
2. Administrative data in the field of social services are collected, but their use by research community can be occasional, due to hampered access to them.
3. Targeted data collections among vulnerable groups (e.g., the Roma, disabled people) took part in the early 2010s, however, without a clear conceptual framework, an elaborated survey design allowing proper benchmarking, and a sustainability plan. The datasets are not integral part of the Hungarian data infrastructure in the field of social policy research, the use of the collected data remained marginal.
4. There are positives as well. A well-designed cohort study entitled Kohorsz'18 (Cohort 18 – Growing up in Hungary, <https://www.kohorsz18.hu/en/>) has been launched in 2017 and funded by the central government from European development funds, coordinated by the Hungarian Demographic Research Institute. The study enables a better understanding of circumstances of childbearing and childrearing in Hungary, along with the distinct parental, family and social features that determine the development of children. The data collection, in which about 9,000 children and their parents participate, started in the gestational age, enabling us to study the circumstances of the pregnancy.
5. In addition, Hungary is part of the main internationally comparable data collections on the educational outcomes (TIMSS, PIRLS, PISA), on the health status and the health behaviour of children (HBSC, ESPAD). However, the microdata is not available for analysis for researchers external to the network in the case of HBSC.

6. As in other countries, lack of comparable indicators regarding children's mental illness, participation, experience of violence, and on-child protection policies (UNICEF 2020).
7. No reliable statistics are available on new family forms.

*(ii) What are the pressing gaps in provision?*

Pre-school interventions targeted to disadvantaged children and their families (e.g., Sure Start houses) reach few members of the target group (e.g., they are regionally restricted, reduced staff, sometimes with low qualification).

The nurseries face shortage of places, especially in less developed regions, which leads to below average use of the service among vulnerable groups. Overall, while coverage is increasing, Hungary is short of the Barcelona target of 33% for children aged 0-2 (15.6% in 2016, European Commission 2018). Still, in 2019, 22% (26% in 2017) of children aged 0-2, do not have access to a nursery in the locality they live (HCSO 2019).

On the other hand, kindergarten attendance is compulsory since 2015 from the age of three. Even before, kindergarten attendance was fairly high (86.3% in 2014), but it increased somewhat further in 2015 (89.1%), while decreased afterwards back to the prior-to-reform level (86.8% in 2016, European Commission 2018). These figures are now very close to the 90% target figure.

*The impact of covid-19 on children and families*

The main measures that were related to family support, has been the following (Gábos and Makay 2020).

*Childcare and schools*

According to the Government decree 45/2020. (III. 14.) from 14 March, all ECEC have been closed between 16 March and 1 to 25 June. According to the Government decree 152/2020. (IV.27) from 27 April, guard was allowed in all institutions.

According to the Government decree 215/2020. (V.20.) from 20 June, all ECEC institutions outside Budapest re-opened on 25 May and all ECEC institutions in Budapest reopened on 2 June. These institutions can close until 31 August for a period of no longer than two weeks.

All schools were closed starting from 16 March 2020 and they switched to digital home schooling, according to the Government decree 1102/2020 (III.13.) and were not re-opened.

*Parental leave*

All regular leave options stayed unchanged during the pandemic. No changes were made to existing leave policies, and no special leave options were implemented.

According to the Government decree 59/2020. (III.23.) In the case when the duration of Parental leave and of related benefits were terminated after the declaration of the emergency situation on 11 March 2020, they were extended until its end (18 June 2020). These benefits are:

- the employment-related childcare fee (Gyermekgondozási díj, GYED), until the second birthday of the child (the third in case of twins);
- the universal childcare allowance (Gyermekgondozást segítő ellátás, GYES), until the third birthday of the child (compulsory school age in case of twins);
- the child-raising support (Gyermeknevelési támogatás, GYET), from the age of three to the age of eight of the youngest child.

In the case of GYED and of GYES, the extension refers to all potential recipients (e.g., grandparents, students included).

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## 10 IRELAND - National report on family support policy & provision

**John Canavan & Carmel Devaney**

### 10.1 Trends and Issues relating to demography

#### (i) Fertility

Table 1. *Fertility rates*

	Total Fertility	Mean Age Women First Birth
2010	2.05	29.2
2015	1.85	29.9
2016	1.81	30.1
2017	1.77	30.3
2018	1.75	30.5
2019	1.7	31.3

Source: Eurostat Database (2020)

The decline in Ireland's fertility rate is one of the key demographic changes in the last fifty years. Always the highest or one of the highest among EU countries, it remains above the EU average but now is well below the replacement rate. In general terms, fertility reduction can be related to changes in policy and legislation on contraception (only easily available from the 1990s, and changes in social attitudes, reflecting declining adherence to Catholic Church teaching on personal morality (Canavan, 2011). The average age of mothers of new-borns and of first-time mothers has increased over time, no doubt reflecting structural changes, in education levels and labour force participation, attitudes to marriage / family formation and

general shifts in attitudes towards women in society. Irish first-time mothers are currently among the oldest in the EU.

*1. Families with children by number of children*

There was a steep decline in the mean number of children per family between 1986 (2.2), 1996 (1.85) and 2016 (1.4). That said, Ireland had the highest proportion of households with children in both 2010 and 2015 among EU countries (Eurostat, 2020a).

*2. Proportion of population (0-19)*

Table 2. *Population 19 years and under*

Year	Proportion of population aged 0-19
2010	27.3
2015	27.7
2016	27.6
2017	27.5
2018	27.3
2019	27.1

Source: Eurostat Database (2020)

Ireland continues to have a youthful population and had the highest proportion of its population aged 0-19 among EU countries in 2019.

*3. Proportion of population over working age (65 and over)*

Table 3. *Population over working age*

Year	Proportion of population aged 65 and over
2010	11.2
2015	12.9
2016	13.2
2017	13.5
2018	13.8
2019	14.1

Source: Eurostat Database (2020)

The corollary of Ireland’s high proportion of young people in the population is lower proportion of older people. Relative to other EU countries, Ireland is well below the EU average and among the countries with the smallest proportion of older people. That said, the proportion has increased in every year since 200.

#### 4. *Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities*

In 2016, there were 535,475 non-Irish nationals living in Ireland, representing 11% of the total population at that time (CSO, 2017, P.50). This reflects how Ireland is becoming an increasingly multicultural society. The increasing ethnic and cultural diversity reflects the impact of migration, both economic and political. It is notable that in 2016 there were more Polish non-nationals in Ireland than those coming from the UK, given our shared history and geographical adjacency with latter. In the 2016 census, those designating themselves as White Irish represented 82% of the population in 2016; the other native Irish ethnic group are Irish Travellers, whose population of 31,987 represented 0.7% of the population (CSO, 2017, p.50). The other recorded ethnic designations were any other White background, non-Chinese Asian, Chinese, Mixed background, African, other Black background. Among the immigrant communities are those living in Direct Provision context, the term used to describe the communal institutional settings in which those seeking asylum are housed, while their applications are processed. The system is recognised as having many problems and policy is currently being reviewed – in 2019 just

over 6,000 people lived in State-run centres with a further 1,500 people accommodated in emergency centres (Department of Justice and Equality, 2019, p.22). At August 2019, there were over 1,600 children in such centres (Irish Refugee Council, 2021).

### 5. *Migration patterns*

While emigration has long been a feature within Irish society, reflecting significant economic growth and global migration patterns, significant immigration has become a feature in recent years. While the levels of migration have been affected by economic conditions here and elsewhere, the patterns over the last number of years have been quite consistent. Irish Central Statistics Office data suggests immigration increasing continuously since 2014 from 65,500 to an estimated 85,400 in 2020 (CSO, 2020a). Generally, the inward migrant group breaks down into one third returning Irish, one third coming from the UK and the EU, and one third from the rest of the world (CSO, 2020a). Low levels of immigrants came from countries with Low HDI scores; for example, of all immigrants in 2018, 7,119 people came from these countries, representing 7% of immigrants in that year (Eurostat, 2020a). Levels of emigration decreased between 2014 and 2019 from 75,000 to 54,900 people, although increasing again in 2020 to an estimated 56,500 (CSO, 2020a). Irish people represented between half and 60% of emigrants during the period, between one quarter and one third came from UK or EU backgrounds, the remainder from the rest of the world (CSO, 2020a).

## 10.2 Trends and issues relating to family structure, parental roles and children's living arrangements

### (i) *Family and household types*

In 2016, there were 1.2 million families in Ireland. Of these, 643,904 were couples with children and 218,817 were lone parent families. A total of 400,000 people lived alone (CSO, 2017). In terms of the 1.2 million households in Ireland, 70.2% comprised families. In all, including those households with children and other adults, there were 630,000 couple-with-children households, 199,000 lone-parent-with-children households and 73,636 cohabiting-couple-with-children households, representing 47%, 17% and 6% of Irish households respectively (CSO, 2017).

### 1. *Marriage and divorce rates*

Historically, Ireland had low marriage rates, but rates are now tending towards European average in more recent years (Eurostat, 2020a). The crude marriage rate for 2019 stood at 4.1 per 1,000 of the population. The average age of brides and grooms has been increasing since the mid-1970s, such that in 2019 the average age of first-time grooms was 35.2 years and first-time brides 33.6 years (CSO, 2020b). Age at first marriage is at the higher end of EU country

averages (Eurostat, 2020a). Ireland only introduced provision for divorce in 1996; between 1999 and 2018 the crude divorce rate has fluctuated between 0.6 and 0.9 per 1,000 of the population at its peak in 2006, standing at 0.7 in 2018 (Eurostat, 2020a; Eurostat, 2020b). The rate of divorce per 100 marriages stood at 14.9 in 2015, as with the crude divorce rate, among the lowest rates in the EU (Eurostat, 2020a). In 2016, there were 222,073 separated and divorced people living in Ireland (CSO, 2017, p.29). The introduction of a less restrictive divorce regime following a referendum in 2019 may have some impact on rates of divorce (Government of Ireland, 2019).

## *2. Lone parent families*

In 2016, people parenting alone headed 18% of all families, in turn representing 17% of Irish households. People parenting alone were: single parents (41%); widowed (23%); separated or divorced (31%), with the remainder still married. At 86%, women headed the vast majority of lone parent families in 2016 (CSOc, 2017, p.37-41).

## *3. New family forms*

Homosexuality was legalized in Ireland in 1993, civil partnerships were introduced in 2010 and same-sex marriage in 2015 (Government of Ireland, 1993; 2010; 2015). In 2016, there were 6,034 same-sex couples (57% male and 43% female). At this time, 86% were cohabiting couples, with 14% married. Ten per cent of the couples had children representing 19% of female same-sex couples and 3% of male same-sex couples (CSO, 2017). Cohabitation has increased as a family / household form in recent years. In 2016, there were 152,302 Co-habiting couples, 12.5% of all family units. Of these, a slight majority had no children; the average number of children per cohabiting couple increased from 0.7 to 0.9 between 2011 and 2016. While there is an absence of research, the general view is that the majority of cohabitation in Ireland is a precursor to marriage, with the average age of cohabiting couples far younger than that of married couples (37.1 versus 52.1 years) in 2016 (CSO, 2017,p.41).

## *4. Family structures and changes across social groups*

See above

## *5. Children and Youth Living in Institutions*

See 7 below

## *6. Children in Out-of-Home Care such as Foster Care*

There were 5,872 children in the care of the State due to Child Protection and Welfare concerns at end January 2021. Most of these children were in foster care – 65% in general foster care

and 26% in relative foster care. A small minority (7%) were in residential care, with 4% in specialised care settings; 2% were denoted as being in 'other' care placements (Tusla, 2021). This distribution of care options has been relatively stable over recent years. It is notable that the numbers of children in care have decreased every year since 2015 when it stood at 6,384 (Tusla, nd, p.56).

### *7. Home-Based Support*

It is difficult to fully account for home based support in the Irish context as different departments of the State, statutory agencies and NGOs are involved in provision across arenas of Child Protection and Welfare, Disability, Physical and Mental Health, Education, Justice and Early Years, among others. Tusla, Ireland's Child Protection and Welfare Agency provides some data on what it terms Family and Community Support services, provided in community and families' homes and with a prevention and early intervention focus. These encompass a variety of service types and modalities of intervention, but a focus on parenting, supporting parents and child development is often central. In 2018, based on data from 88% of services, 37,024 children were referred to Tusla family support services with 18,343 children receiving services at year end (Tusla, 2019, p.93). It is important to note the development by Tusla of the Programme for Partnership, Prevention and Family Support which incorporates an early intervention and prevention practice model named Meitheal, and the establishment of Child and Family Support Networks (CFSNs) as local service co-ordinating mechanisms (Malone and Canavan, 2018 (Malone and Canavan, 2018; Rodriguez et al., 2018)).

## **10.3 Trends and issues relating to socio-economic and educational disadvantage**

### *(i) Poverty rates*

In 2018, 14.8% of the population was at risk of poverty, below the average for EU countries; the rate has been relatively steady over the last ten years, its highest level in that time being 16.8% (in 2016). The corresponding rate for children in 2018 was 15.8%, also below the EU average in that year. Over the previous ten years, its highest level was 18.9%. However, the level of social exclusion for children in 2018 was 23.9%, close to the EU average, with far greater variation in the previous ten years. For example, it reached 34.4 % in 2013. The rate of severe material deprivation stood at 4.9% of the population in 2018, just below the average for EU countries. This had reached a peak of 9.9% in 2012 and 2013 (all Eurostat, 2020). Two aspects of Ireland's poverty rates are noteworthy; first is the impact of the financial crisis and subsequent austerity, and second is the significant role social welfare transfers play in reducing poverty levels (Watson and Maître, 2013). Table 4 sets out the composition of poverty in 2019, indicating the significance of children and those at work among the poor.

Table 4. *At risk of poverty by principal economic status*

At work	15.4
Unemployed	10.9
Student	10.6
Home duties	13.4
Retired	9.9
Not at work due to illness or disability	12.3
Children under 16 years of age	26.1
Other	1.4
At work	100

Source: Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) (CSO) 2019

### 1. *Employment/unemployment rates*

In 2019, Ireland's unemployment rate stood at 5.0%, below the average of EU countries (Eurostat, 2020). But the recent history of unemployment is notably volatile, reflecting the financial crisis of 2008 and its aftermath of an economic recession, bailout by the EU and the IMF and a period of austerity. Unemployment peaked in 2012 standing at 15.5% (Eurostat, 2020). While the overall picture is very positive, it is also the case that there is much part-time, precarious and low-paid employment within that picture. Obviously, in the past year, Covid 19 has had a significant impact on the economy and employment and its longer-term implications unknown (Social Justice Ireland, 2020, p.122).

#### (i) *Patterns within unemployment*

In 2019, women and men had similar rates of unemployment (5.2% vs/ 5.6%), although women's overall labour force participation and employment rates are below those of men. In the same year, there were 41,000 unemployed young people (15-24 years) representing one third of total unemployment; this level of youth unemployment was down from a peak of 105,000 in 2009 (Social Justice Ireland, 2020, p.127). People with disabilities have a far lower labour force participation rate than the general population at 30% (Social Justice Ireland, 2020, p.130). In relation to nationality and ethnicity, Watson (2017) highlights high levels of labour market disadvantage among Irish Travellers, while McGinnity et al (2018) evidenced that non-Irish Black people are less likely to be employed than those of White Irish origin. It is worth noting that Ireland removed a ban on work by people seeking asylum in 2018.

*(ii) Patterns of educational disadvantage*

In general terms, Ireland's education story is one of success. In 2019, among EU states, it had the fifth lowest rate of early school leavers in the 18-24 age category (5%), the third highest proportion of 20- to 24-year-olds with higher secondary education (84%) and the fourth highest proportion of people in the 30-34 age group with a third level educational qualification (CSO, 2020e). There have been programmes of support for schools in disadvantaged areas for many years, with some evidence of narrowing of gaps in attainment (Weir and Kavanagh, 2018). However, the role of income inequality in achievement gaps remains key (Social Justice Ireland, 2020, p.217), while ethnic background affects educational experiences and outcomes. Thus, Traveller children and those from migrant backgrounds are more likely to be attending disadvantaged schools, while the former group has historically very poor educational outcomes (Social Justice Ireland, 2020, p.216). Notably, there is evidence of segregation of migrant children within the primary school system (Ledwith, 2017), while Kennedy and Smith (2019) highlight the high level of disadvantage of Roma schoolchildren and the socio-economic conditions that shape their educational experience.

*(iii) Major social welfare trends such as disadvantage risks, welfare benefit receipt levels*

In 2019, Irish state expenditure on all forms of social protection expenditure was €17.7billion – included here are pensions, unemployment, sickness / disability, carer, maternity, child benefit and lone parent related payments. This is funded through a mix of exchequer revenue and social insurance contributions (NESC, 2020, p.19). Between 2010 and 2019, the main trends were:

- Gradual increase in means-tested illness, disability and caring social assistance payments
- Cyclical pattern in working-age income supports with a decline in social assistance unemployment related payments prior to the pandemic

- Means-tested Working Family Payment was €397m in 2019 more than double the 2010 figure

During the period, social security expenditure as a per cent of GNP fell from 15.1 per cent to 7.6 per cent (NESC, 2020, p.21). By 2019, Universal Child Benefit payment expenditure stood at €2.1billion. Most recent quarterly data from the Department of Social Protection suggests an overall level of expenditure of €8.2 billion for the first quarter of 2021, with income and employment supports comprising €3.9 billion of this total (quarterly figure of €1.1 billion for the same period in 2020) (Department of Social Protection, 2021, ps.3,4).

#### *(iv) Housing*

While Ireland performs well relative other EU countries in respect of overcrowding and housing debt burden metrics, housing is an issue of major national concern in Ireland. Reflecting an increasing need for housing at a population level, the long-term neglect by the state of investment in public housing, the consequences of the economic crisis, which had a private housing boom and bust component, and the subsequent economic austerity programme, housing issues affect thousands of people in Ireland. Thus in 2019, there were: 9,751 people classified as homeless (6,309 adults and 3,442 dependents); 68,693 households (half of which were family / multi-adult households) on the waiting list for social housing; and 81,232 home mortgages in arrears (some of which are investment properties and not owner-occupied family homes) (Social Justice Ireland, 2020, ps.151, 152, 155).

#### *(v) Overall socioeconomic context*

Prior to the pandemic, the Irish economy had returned to significant economic and employment growth (McQuinn et al., 2021). While burdened by significant long-term national debt as a consequence of austerity, the State was at a point where it could address with great intent the more intractable policy issues, for example, housing and health, and return to progress in achieving poverty reduction targets. COVID-19 has impacted hugely on the State, but while significant, the sectoral impact of the crisis, the continued growth in GDP (McQuinn et al., 2021), and the common nature of the economic challenges across all EU states, means that unlike the 2008 crisis, this one is not existential.

### **10.4 The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions and actors' which shape the goals, substance, and delivery of family support policy and provision**

#### *(i) Relationship with EU*

The recent Brexit negotiations indicate the importance of EU membership for Ireland and while the historic relationship with the UK will continue, it is reasonable to suggest that stronger

economic, social and cultural ties with the EU and continental Europe may emerge over time. On joining in 1973, membership had an immediate effect on Ireland's response to gender-based discrimination and inequality in the labour market with subsequent legislative and policy influences felt in relation to environment, consumer rights and many other areas (Kennedy, 2001). Ireland has been an enthusiastic supporter of the EU, benefiting greater from various funding measures for example, in agriculture, industry, education and training, infrastructure and regional development. It is expected that Ireland will become a net contributor to the EU budget in the next Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 (European Commission, 2021).

### *1. Influential policy actors*

In the absence of a single dedicated Family ministry, the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Inclusion and Youth is the single most important policy actor in relation to children. This department of state, formerly, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, is responsible for key areas of policy relating to child protection and welfare, early learning and care, youth justice, adoption, youth and participation Justice, International Protection and Equality Division (See <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-children-equality-disability-integration-and-youth/>).

Historically, the department has driven policy development for children and young people. The Ombudsman for Children, whose office has a broad remit for protecting children's rights and specific responsibilities in relation to investigating complaints against public services by children is another key policy actor (see <https://www.oco.ie/>). The Special Rapporteur on Child Protection role was created in 2006 with particular responsibilities for advising Ireland's houses of parliament on national and international legal developments relating to the protection of children (O'Mahony, 2020, p.3).

### *2. Influential lobby groups*

Ireland has strict legislation regarding lobbying with the result that many organisations are registered as lobbyists (Ireland, 2015). De facto, in relation to children's issues generally, a small number of organisations, either direct service providers or umbrella / network organisations are very active in lobbying and awareness raising activities. In relation to children, among these are the Children's Rights Alliance and organisations such as Barnardos, the Irish Society Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Foróige, Youth Work Ireland and Early Childhood Ireland. At the family level, the National Women's Council of Ireland is a key organisation focused on women's rights and family issues, while more specialised organisations such as One Family and Treoir advocate for those parenting alone.

### *3. Influential policy networks*

The Children's Rights Alliance is a key organisation focused on children's rights Ireland and has been to fore in ongoing children's rights issues and participating in the regular reviews of Ireland's performance in relation to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN Commission on Human Rights, 1990) (see <https://www.childrensrights.ie/>). In the last number of years, after a significant period of state and philanthropic investment in Ireland, the Children's Research Network of Ireland and Northern Ireland, and the Prevention and Early Intervention Network have developed. At a broader level, The Wheel, which is an association of community and voluntary organisations, charities, and social enterprises (NGOs) is a significant organisation in the Irish context wherein such organisations play key roles in service delivery across all policy spheres including children and families (<https://www.wheel.ie/>).

#### *4. Democratic system and main political parties*

The national parliament of Ireland is the Dáil and its members are elected through a Single Transferable Vote proportional representation system. There are currently 160 members of parliament or TDs. Traditionally the two main political parties have been Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, both having their roots in the Ireland's civil war, and both generally considered to be centrist parties. In recent years however, Sinn Féin which also operates in Northern Ireland has increased in popularity and now has the second highest number of TDs in the Dáil. Sinn Féin is broadly left of centre in orientation and has a key political goal of the unifying Northern Ireland and the Republic. Additionally, there are a number of smaller parties including the Greens, Labour, others on the left and independent TDs. Ireland's has 31 local authorities, 26 county councils, three city councils and two councils covering city and county. Compared to other jurisdictions, Ireland's local government system is weak, holding limited finance raising powers and functions (Coakley and Gallagher, 2009, Citizens Information).

#### *5. Political system and its relevance to family policy / family support*

Historically family has held enormous significance in Irish society and politics. As is well described, the Catholic Church held enormous influence in Ireland, for the majority of the twentieth century subsequent to independence, reflected no more so than in the constitution. Herein, the marital family was accorded special significance (Government of Ireland, 2020a). Critically, alongside this was the dominance of the view that family was a private space, not to be subject to interference by the State, reflecting Catholic social teaching on subsidiarity (Canavan, 2011). Family and family support received explicit attention in policy only in the last 30 years. A notable milestone was the Commission on the Family which reported in 1998 and as a result of which a new Family Support Agency (FSA), a programme of local Family Resource Centres and a Family Mediation service developed (Commission on the Family, 1998). The fact that the FSA is now defunct suggests that there was no strong political will or interest to have a

specialised unit focused on family policy; with family featuring as a focus in other policy areas for example, social protection and housing. It is arguable that children is the preferred focus for the State, reflected in the creation of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in 2011, recently reconstituted as the Department of Children Equality Disability Integration and Youth. It is worth noting that a strong localism exists in Irish politics so that both local councillors and national members of parliament will be very familiar with service provision locally as it relates to families.

#### *6. Institutional framework / roles and remits*

There is no single government department responsible of all family and children related policy. The Department with direct responsibility for children is the newly named Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. As its title suggests it is also responsible for disability, equality, and social inclusion policy. Other government departments for example Education, Health, Social Protection, Local Government / Housing and Justice, develop and implement key children and family related policy. At the policy implementation / delivery level, a number of key agencies operate including Tusla, the Child and Family Agency (with responsibility for Child Protection), the Health Service Executive which looks after physical and mental health, An Garda Síochána (the police force) which is responsible for the administration of juvenile justice and related service provision. While the vast majority of primary and post-primary schools are fully funded by the State, most operate as independent entities with their own governance.

#### *7. Participation in policy making (all stakeholders)*

There is no doubt that participation in policy making is a matter of increasing attention by the Irish state. According to the website for the current plan Ireland's public services (<https://www.ops2020.gov.ie/what-is-ops2020/overview/>): 'Action 4 aims to enhance engagement and accountability around the delivery of public services, so that the public and businesses have greater input into the planning, design, implementation and review of public services'. There are a number of examples of structures and processes aimed at increasing participation of the public in policymaking and service design. At national level, the Citizen's Assembly format was used as a pre-policy making process in relation to changes in abortion legislation and more recently in debating gender equality and constitutional changes relating to women and families (see <https://www.citizensassembly.ie/en/>).

At local government level, the local authorities operate Public Participation Networks, which support engagement with community groups (see <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/b59ee9-community-network-groups/>). Also attached to the local authorities,

Comhairle na nÓg are structures aimed at involving children and young people in local policy and service development; in turn they link to a national youth parliament Dáil na nÓg (see <http://www.comhairlenanog.ie/who-we-are/>).

The Child and Family Agency, Tusla have made a significant commitment to participation by children in its service with its Child and Youth Participation Strategy 2019-2023 (Tusla, 2019). While these are some among many others, is it beyond this case study to report on their overall impact on policy formation and outputs, and whether they create the conditions for meaningful participation for those involved. There are some studies, however. For example, Farrell, Suiter and Harris (2019) highlight the significance of the Citizens Assembly in relation to the subsequent constitutional referendum on abortion, while Forde and Martin (2016) similarly offer a positive view of the value of Comhairle na nÓg. Reviewing children's participation in Tusla, prior to significant investment in this area and to the 2019 strategy, Brady et al. (2018) found good practices but scope for a more comprehensive response.

#### *Documents since 2000*

The two key policy documents relating to children are the first National Children's Strategy (2000) year and Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (2014). The latter refers to listening to and involving children and young people as one of six transformational goals. It is also associated with three further sectoral strategies that emphasise participation: First Five: A Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children, and their Families (2019); National Youth Strategy (2015) and National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making (2015). While apparent in the latter, participation has been a significant theme in all policy relating to children and young people since the first National Children's Strategy. This reflects the context from which the strategy emerged and specifically a critical report on Ireland's performance in relation to its duties under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN Commission on Human Rights, 1990). The Child and Family Agency has produced policy to drive the participation of children and young people in line with their rights (Child and Youth Participation Strategy 2019-2023) and also promotes parental participation in protection and welfare services via a toolkit (Parental Participation Toolkit, 2015).

Policy has resulted in formal structures at national and local level (Dáil na nÓg and Comhairle na nÓg respectively) with a strong stated commitment at Departmental level to consultation with children. Currently, the Department runs an online participation hub aimed at supporting participatory practice in all contexts involving children and young people. There has been no single overarching policy document focused on family since 1998 when the Commission on the Family reported. Where family features strongly is in relation to parenting with a high-level policy statement from 2015 and a recently created parenting unit within the

Department. There have been developments in other key policy areas, including separation and divorce, reproductive rights and other areas, but these have not been integrated within an overall strategic vision on the role of family in society.

*The extent to which participation has been implemented \**

Consultations with children and young people have been regularly used to inform the process of policy formation in Ireland (DCYA, 2015b). However, it is difficult to assess the extent to which policy has been implemented and with what effect. Certainly, as a consequence of the 2012 referendum on children's rights, and subsequent constitutional changes, it is fair to say that there is a far stronger societal level awareness of this issue. It can be stated with confidence that Ireland's Child and Family Agency made a significant commitment to children's and young people's participation and undertook a major capacity building programme in children's participation between 2015 and 2018 (Tierney et al. 2018).

## **10.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services**

*(i) The priorities in child welfare and family policy \**

At the time of writing, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth is working on updating the 1991 Child Care Act (Government of Ireland, 1991), which is the main governing legislation on child protection and welfare. One of the key developments at practice level over the last few years has been the introduction of the current version of the child protection guidelines, Children First (Government of Ireland, 2017), and introducing mandatory reporting of concerns under the Children First Act, 2015 (Government of Ireland, 2015). At the implementation level, the Child and Family Agency, Tusla, is indicating a prioritisation of Child Protection, Child in Care and Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence services during the current Covid 19 crisis period. This comes after an extensive period of investment in and development of prevention, early intervention, and family support services by the organisation (Malone and Canavan, 2018). In the absence of an integrated family policy department, it is difficult to be definitive as to priorities in family policy. One useful source on priorities is the current Programme for Government – such documents traditionally serve to indicate political priorities within the term of the incumbent government. While necessarily inclusive of the ongoing response to the Covid 19 crisis, the document covers the full span of public policy areas (Government of Ireland, 2020b). Reflecting prior policy failures, health and housing feature strongly as areas for focused action, a commitment to developing universal health care in the former and specific commitments in relation to housing and homelessness in the latter, both of

which have clear family dimensions. Family also features in relation to commitments under many other policy areas, for example, environment, social protection, disability and responding to the needs of particular groups referenced earlier in the case study. Notably, the document contains the heading *Children and Family Support* under which commitments on early years' provision, parenting support and early intervention are presented.

1. *The main types of family provision and support and key features (eg different types of cash support (universal and targeted, work-family reconciliation measures and children's / family services, child care etc) \**

Support for families and parents in Ireland comes in a variety of forms. In terms of direct payments, child benefit is a key long-established universal payment for families with children (NESC, 2020). Alongside this, various means-tested, social protection measures are in place including, for example, the One Parent Family Payment, the Working Family Payment for families on low wages and the Back-to-School Clothing and Footwear Allowance, Fuel Allowance or housing assistance payments. The Carers Allowance is available to support low-income families with an incapacitated family member (Citizens Information, 2021).

Families and parents are also supported through a variety of forms of leave and associated social insurance benefits, covering for example, maternity and paternity leave and parental leave. All children in Ireland are entitled to one free preschool year, while subsidised childcare places are available on both a universal level to make childcare more affordable and targeted to families on low income to support work and educational engagement. Similarly, direct support to families comes from a variety of sources, in a variety of forms.

The core universal provision is within the health domain, involving the Public Health Nurse service for mothers of new babies, and free General Practitioner Care for all children under the age of six, introduced in 2015. The Health Service Executive is involved in family related provision across a range of therapeutic areas, although it is safe to say that the public system involves significant waiting lists across all of its services (Social Justice Ireland, 2020, p.190-201).

Outside of this, family related provision exists across child protection, youth work, mental health, community and local development, addiction / drugs and alcohol prevention, and juvenile justice service delivery sectors, among others. Support can take the form of one-to-one or group-based provision, in home, such as targeted supports for families with youth in crises, or clinic or community-based settings, such as family support centres targeting disadvantaged families, or more generalist youth work services. These can involve professional, para-professional and volunteer staff. In some cases, provision is directly by State agencies and services, but,

reflecting a long-established tradition of community and voluntary activity, much provision is by the NGO sector with state funding.

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## 11 ITALY - National report on family support policy & provision

**Emanuele Bilotti, Ilaria Garaci, Paola Milani, Sara Serbati, Arianna Thiene**

### 11.1 Trend and issues related to demography (Italy)

*(i) Fertility rates*

Table 1. *Total fertility rate*

Year	Rate
2010	1.46
2015	1.35
2016	1.34
2017	1.32
2018	1.29

Table 2. *Mean age of women at birth of first child*

Year	Age
2015	30.8
2016	31
2017	31.1
2018	31.2

From the analysis of fertility rate data (i) it may be noted a progressive increase in the average age of first-time mothers (+ 0,4 from 2015 to 2018). It is related to a gradual decline of the total fertility rate (- 0,06 from 2015 to 2018 and -0,17 from 2010).

(ii) *Families with children by number of children*

Table 3. *Couples with children*

Year	%
2010	36.5
2011	35.5
2012	34.5
2013	34.6
2014	34.6
2015	33.9
2019	31.6

Table 4. *By number of children*

Year	One child	Two children	Three (+) children
	%		
2010	47.2	42.5	10.3
2011	46.8	42.8	10.4
2012	47.3	41.8	10.9

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2013	47.1	42.2	10.7
2014	46.4	43.1	10.5
2015	47.3	42.1	10.6
2019	47.9	41.7	20.4

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The data (ii) shows a gradual decline in the percentage of couples with children, which amounts to 4,9% in the timeframe from 2010 to 2019. The decline is 1% in the years 2010-2012, and has slowed down since 2013. From 2010 to 2019, families with one child increased (0,7%), while those with two children decreased (-0,8%). There has been a slight percentage increase in families with 3+ children (+0,1%).

*(iii) Percentage of the population from 0 to 18*

Table 5

Year	%
2010	19
2015	18.5
2016	18.4
2017	18.3
2018	18.2
2019	18

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The data (iii) highlights the population's gradual decline in percentage from age 0 to 18, which amounts to 1% in the 2010-2019 period.

*(iv) Percentage of population over working (retiring) age*

Table 6. *Proportion of population aged 65 years and more*

Year	%
2010	20.4
2015	21.7
2016	22
2017	22.3
2018	22.6
2019	22.8

Table 7. *Old dependency ratio 1st variant (population 65 and over to population 15-64 years)*

Year	%
2010	31.2
2015	33.7
2016	34.3
2017	34.8
2018	35.2
2019	35.7

Table 8. *Old dependency ratio 2nd variant (population 60 and over to population 20-59 years)*

Year	%
2010	49.9
2015	51.5
2016	52.4
2017	53.4
2018	55.3

The presented data (iv) is intended to highlight the population's progressive ageing. The increasing percentage of the population aged 65 years old and over in relation to the total population stood at 2,4% from 2010 to 2019. The increasing growth of people aged over 60, hence the ageing population, is quite sharper if compared to the age ranges considered (15-65 +4,5% e 20-59 +5,4%).

(v) *Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities:*

No data

(vi) *Migration patterns*

Table 9. *Number of immigrants – total, all geopolitical entities*

Year	Total No.
2015	280,078
2016	300,823
2017	343,440
2018	332,324

Table 10. *Number of immigrants – children (below 15) all geopolitical entities*

Year	Total No.
2015	36,054
2016	38,226
2017	42,107
2018	44,965

Table 11. *Number of immigrants – total, non-EU countries with low HDI*

Year	Total No.
2015	62,860
2016	78,267
2017	106,422
2018	84,919

Table 12. *Numbers of immigrants – children (below 15) non-EU countries with low HDI*

Year	Total No.
2015	5,455
2016	5,764
2017	7,312

2018            7,374

The data on migration patterns (vi) reveal a gradual increase, characterised by a strong rise in 2017. The same trend may be encountered in the total flux coming from non-European countries. The same point cannot be made with regard to the total immigration of under 15 aged population, which augmentation appears to be stable also in 2017. The immigration of underaged people coming from non-European countries, on the other hand, is stable in the years 2015 and 2016, increases in 2017, and finally remains almost unchanged in 2018.

### 11.2 Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles, and children’s arrangements (Italy)

(i) *Family household types (Source: ISTAT)*

Table 13. *Singles*

Year	%
2015	33.1
2016	33.7
2017	34.1
2018	35.2
2019	35.6

Table 14. *Couples with children*

Year	%
2015	33.9

2016	33.3
2017	32.6
2018	31.9
2019	31.6

Table 15. *Couples without children*

Year	%
2015	19.5
2016	19.4
2017	19.5
2018	19.1
2019	18.6

Table 16. *Single parents with children*

Year	%
2015	8.9
2016	9
2017	9.2
2018	9
2019	9.3

Table 17. *Recomposed families*

Year	%
2015	7.1
2016	7.2
2017	7.5
2018	8.3
2019	9.2

*(ii) Marriage and divorce rates*

Table 18. *Crude marriage rate*

Year	Rate
2010	3.7
2015	3.2
2016	3.4
2017	3.2
2018	3.2

Table 19. *Total first marriage rate – females*

Year	Rate
2010	0.53
2014	0.47
2016	0.51
2017	0.48
2018	0.5

Table 20. *Mean age at first marriage (females)*

Year	Age
2010	30.3
2014	31.3
2016	31.9
2017	32.2
2018	32.4

Table 21. *Crude divorce rate*

Year	Rate
2010	0.9
2015	1.4

2016	1.6
2017	1.5
2018	1.5

Table 22. *Number of divorces/100 marriages*

Year	No.
2010	24.9
2015	42.4
2016	48.7
2017	47.9

Table 23. *Average household size*

Year	Average
2010	2.4
2015	2.4
2016	2.3
2017	2.3
2018	2.3

Data (ii) shows that the total marriage rate from 2010 to 2018 has suffered a drop of -0,5 whereas the total divorce rate has increased by +0,6 leading to a meaningful increase in divorce

on a number of 100 weddings from 24,9 to 47,9. In addition, women's first wedding average age has progressively increased from 2010 which from 2018 stood at +2,1. The family average size only decreases by -0,1 between 2015 and 2016 but remains unchanged between 2016 and 2018.

*(iii) Lone parent families*

Table 24

Year	%
2010	8.3
2015	8.9
2016	9
2017	9.2
2018	9
2019	9.3

The percentage of lone parent families has progressively increased from 2010 to 2019, and stands at +1.

*(iv) New family forms such as same-sex couple households*

7.513 families who took part in the 15<sup>th</sup> Census (2011) declared to be same-sex couples (ISTAT, 2014). Since 2016, civil unions among same-sex couples have been approved.

In 2018, there were 13.300 same-sex couples who had a civil union (in Italy or abroad prior to 2016).

There are no national data on same-sex couples with children because the Civil Unions Act does not recognize any legal bond between homosexual parents and their children.

*(v) Family structures and changes across social groups:*

No data

Table 25. *Children and youth living in institutions:* <sup>13</sup>

Year	No.
1998/1999	14,945
2007	13,450
2010	11,230
2013	12,560
2015	11,945
2016	12,603

Table 26

Age of minors (years) in 2016	%
0-2	12.7
3-5	8.9
6-10	16
11-14	27.8

(i) <sup>13</sup> source Dipartimento per le politiche della famiglia- Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri - <https://www.minori.gov.it/it/minori/quaderno-48-accogliere-bambini-biografie-storie-e-famiglie>

15-17

34.6

- (i) Children in out of home care such as foster care: source Dipartimento per le politiche della famiglia- Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri <https://www.minori.gov.it/it/minori/bambini-e-ragazzi-fuori-famiglia-quaderno-66>

Table 27

Year	No.
1998/1999	10,200
2007	16,420
2010	14,370
2013	14,120
2015	14,140
2016	14,012

Table 28

Age of minors (years) in 2016	%
0-2	4.8
3-5	11.3
6-10	31.6
11-14	31.4

15-17

20.9

Through the analysis of data (vi) and (vii) one can notice that between 1998-2016 there was a decrease in the number of children living in institutions (from 14.945 to 12.603). Between 1998-2010, a steady decline can be observed; excluding 2013 and 2016 when the number slightly increases again. In contrast, between 1998-2016 one can note an increase in the number of children in foster care (from 10.200 to 14.012): the increase is clear between 1998-2007 but the number decreases from 2007-2010, remaining almost unchanged from 2013 to 2016.

(vi) *Home-based support: no data*

### 11.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare (Italy)

(i) *Poverty rates*

Table 29. *People at risk of poverty or social exclusion*

Year	%
2010	18.7
2015	19.9
2016	20.6
2017	20.3
2018	20.3

Table 30. *People at risk of poverty or social exclusion – under 18 years*

Year	%
2010	29.5
2015	33.5
2016	33.2
2017	32.1
2018	30.6

Table 31. *Severe material deprivation rate*

Year	%
2010	7.4
2015	11.5
2016	12.1
2017	10.1
2018	8.5

Table 32. *Severe material deprivation rate – under 18 years*

Year	%
2010	8.6
2015	13

2016	12.4
2017	9.8
2018	8.1

The data (i) shows a general increase in the poverty rate between 2010 and 2018.

(ii) *Employment/unemployment rates*

Table 33. *Unemployment rate – percentage of active population*

Year	%
2010	8.4
2015	11.9
2016	11.7
2017	11.2
2018	10.6

Table 34. *Employment rate from 15-64 years*

Year	%
2010	56.8
2015	56.3
2016	57.2

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2017	58
2018	58.5

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From the analysis of the employment and unemployment rates (ii) we highlight that the working population unemployment percentage has risen by +2% from 2010 to 2018, but such an increase was not steady. The percentage has risen by +3,5% between 2010 and 2015, and suffered a gradual drop that amounted to -1,3% between 2015 and 2018. The total employment rate of the population aged between 15 and 64 years old, on the other hand, has seen an uptick of 1,7% between 2010 and 2018, but the same rate decreases by 0,5% between 2010 and 2015 and finally grows by +2,2% from 2015 to 2018.

(iii) *Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage related to gender, age, ethnicity, migrant status and other social dimensions: source ISTAT [https://www.istat.it/it/files//2020/06/REPORT\\_POVERTA\\_2019.pdf](https://www.istat.it/it/files//2020/06/REPORT_POVERTA_2019.pdf)*

Table 35. *Absolute poverty*

Indicators	2018	2019
Poor families	1,822	1,674
Poor people	5,040	4,593
Incidence of absolute family poverty	7%	6.4%
Incidence of absolute individual poverty	8.4%	7.7%
Intensity of absolute family poverty	19.4%	20.3%

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Table 36

Indicators	Year 2019				
	North-west	Noth-east	Center	South	Isles
Poor families	420	306	242	470	236
Poor people	1092	768	663	1452	619
Incidence of absolute family poverty	5.8%	6%	4.5%	8.5%	8.7%
Incidence of absolute individual poverty	6.8%	6.6%	5.6%	10.5%	9.4%
Intensity of absolute family poverty	20.2%	19.9%	18.1%	21.6%	20.4%

From the analysis of the absolute poverty rates (iii), we highlight that the number of families and people who live below poverty line tend to decrease from 2018 to 2019. In 2019, the incidence of absolute poverty at the household level and in terms of individuals (i.e., the number of families and individuals who lack the fundamental resources for living a decent life) decreased with respect to 2018 by -0,6% and -0,7% values, respectively. The incidence of absolute poverty in terms of individuals was higher in both years respect to that observed at the household level. Overall, the incidence of absolute poverty rate at family and individual levels appears higher, especially in the south and islands regions, that represent the poorest areas of the country. The intensity of poverty, that is “how poor the poor are”, reached 19.4% in 2018 and 20,3% in 2019, from a minimum of 18.1% in the Centre to a maximum of 21.6% in the South.

(iv) *Patterns of education disadvantage: source EUROSTAT*  
<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tps00108&plugin=1>

Table 37. *General government contributions*

Year	Percentage
2008	11.3
2010	13.2
2013	14.5
2015	14.8
2016	14.7
2017	14.2
2018	14

Table 38. *Employer's social contribution*

Year	Percentage
2008	10.5
2010	10.9
2015	10.5
2016	10.4
2017	10.4
2018	10.7

From the analysis of patterns concerning education disadvantage (iv) we highlight a general increase in government expenditure on education in the last ten years of + 2.7%, with

the highest value in 2015 (14,8%) and the lowest value in 2008 (11.3%). In 2018, employer's social contribution accounted for 10,7%, with an increase in the amount of social contribution by +0,2% in respect to 2008. The minimum percentage value was observed in 2016 and 2017 with a value of 10.4%.

(v) *Major social welfare trends such as disadvantage risks, welfare benefit receipt levels:*

No data

(vi) *Housing problems*

Table 39. *Overcrowding rate*

Year	Total percentage
2010	24.3
2015	27.8
2016	27.8
2017	27.1
2018	27.8

Table 40. *Overcrowding rate – less than 18 years*

Year	Total percentage
2010	10.2
2015	10.9
2016	10.7
2017	9.4

2018 9.2

Table 41. *Housing cost overburden rate*

Year	Total percentage
2010	7.7
2015	8.6
2016	9.6
2017	8.2
2018	8.2

Table 42. *Housing cost overburden rate – less than 18 years*

Year	Total percentage
2010	10.2
2015	10.9
2016	10.7
2017	9.4
2018	9.2

From the analysis of the housing problems rate (vi) there is an overcrowding total rate increase of +3,5% between 2015 and 2018; the same rate decreases by -1% during the same years with regard to the underaged population. The housing cost overburden total rate

increased by +0,5% between 2010 and 2018, but decreased by -1% with regard to the underaged population.

*Summary: The broader socio-economic context and trends which influences children's, parental and family circumstances and environments:*

The economic crisis that hit Italy between 2011 and 2014 contributed to the increase in the number of children living in poverty. In this period, the percentage has risen from 5% to 10% of the total, over a million minors living in very difficult economic situations.

A serious problem of educational poverty and school dropout is linked to this condition of poverty.

In 2019, also due to the introduction of Citizens' Income, there was a decline in absolute poverty.

This positive trend was abruptly stopped due to the current health emergency as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As we will see, in order to react to the phenomenon of the decline in births, in recent years various strategies to support parenting have been implemented, which a focus on economic measures and services. However, early childhood services remain insufficient.

#### **11.4 The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions, and actors' which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision**

*(i) Membership to the EU*

YES. (Founding member)

*(ii) Relationship with European Union*

The European Union is aware of the importance of actions to support the family in situations of vulnerability, as part of the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the principles contained in the European Pillar of Social Rights. This awareness has also led to: the Council of Europe Recommendation (2006) 19 on Policy to Support Positive Parenting and the European Commission Recommendation (2013) Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage, both aim to support parents in caring for their children in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. These recommendations have been partly developed in Italy in the context of the Fourth National Plan of action and interventions for the protection of the rights and development of people in developmental age (so-called National Childhood Plan), prepared by the Observatory

for Children and Adolescents and adopted by Decree of the President of the Republic on 31.8.2016, as well as in the National Guidelines on intervention with children and families in vulnerable situations, adopted by Government.

*(iii) Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy*

Support for families is a central policy issue in our country and has been taken into account by almost all political parties (from Movimento 5 stelle, the Partito Democratico (PD), Liberi e Uguali party (LeU), Lista Insieme, the Lista + Europa, the Civic Popular List, Noi con l'Italia, the Coalition of center-right/Forza Italia, the Lega - and the Fratelli d'Italia). The proposed family policy is mainly focused on the following measures: reduction of the tax burden on families (with children), direct monetary benefits (family bonuses, etc.), supplementary family allowance as a national measure to combat poverty, strengthening of social services for early childhood; regulation of leave and flexibility of working time.

*(iv) Influential lobbying groups*

Several networks of organisations and associations are involved in the field of children's and adolescents' rights and in promoting policies to support parenting. Some of these networks have, on June 17, 2020, discussed and signed the document "educAzioni: five steps to combat educational poverty and promote the rights of girls, boys, and adolescents" (available at [https://asvis.it/public/asvis2/files/Pubblicazioni/Documento\\_educAzioni.pdf](https://asvis.it/public/asvis2/files/Pubblicazioni/Documento_educAzioni.pdf)) shared by the Government, which has invited the same networks to collaborate in the project definition of the policy lines that Italy will present in the European Union in the framework of NEXt GenerationEu. These networks include the Working Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Adolescence (CRC); a network currently made up of 100 Third Sector subjects who have long been actively involved in the promotion and protection of children's and adolescents' rights and coordinated by Save the Children Italia, with the aim of achieving greater and effective application in Italy of the CRC and its Optional Protocols. The other networks are: Alleanza per l'Infanzia, Appello della Società Civile per la ricostruzione di un welfare a misura di tutti le persone e dei territori, Alleanza Italiana per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile - ASviS, Coordinamento Nazionale Comunità di Accoglienza - CNCA, Forum Disuguaglianze e Diversità - ForumDD, Forum Education, #Giustaltalia Patto per la Ripartenza, Tavolo Saltamuri.

*(v) Influential policy/research networks*

Among the main research networks there is the Working Group CRC. We also mention one of the oldest Italian institutions dedicated to the protection of children, the «Istituto degli Innocenti di Firenze». The Institute in particular promotes the active rights of children and adolescents

through a set of services and activities (residential and educational activities, as well as research and monitoring of the condition of childhood).

*(vi) The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support*

The Italian political system is based on a representative democracy in the form of a parliamentary Republic. The State is organized in a centralized manner but with significant administrative and legislative decentralization to the Regions, initiated by Law No. 59 of 1997 (Bassanini Law), and strengthened by Constitutional Law No. 3 of 18 October 2001, which reformed Chapter V of the Italian Constitution. In this context, the Regions have full and exclusive legislative power in the field of social services. However, this regionalization of the welfare system has led to a fragmentation between systems, institutions and services in the implementation of intervention processes, territorial differentiation, and the absence of a unified organized policy at the national level on support to families in vulnerable situations and child protection. This is highlighted in the Fourth National Plan. With a view to providing unified indications, at the national level, of possible actions to support families, on December 21, 2017, the Government approved the national Guidelines, in collaboration with the Regions and Autonomous Provinces and with the Scientific Group of the University of Padova.

*(vii) The democratic system and main political parties (unitary vs federal state structures; centralised vs. decentralised structures)*

With Law no. 112 of July 12, 2011, the Italian Authority for Children and Adolescents (AGIA) was set up with the aim of ensuring the full implementation and protection of the rights and interests of children and adolescents, in accordance with the provisions of international conventions and in particular by the New York and Strasbourg conventions, as well as by the constitutional rules. The powers attributed by law to the AGIA are largely overlapping those of the Regional guarantors which were already operating on Italian territory before the establishment of the AGIA; in order to ensure collaboration with the regional guarantors, the National Conference for the guarantee of the rights of children and adolescents has been established. At the moment, however, there is a lack of coordination to make the action of the Regional guarantors synergistic and effective.

*(viii) The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular (e.g. Ministry roles, national vs local/regional government roles)*

By Decree Law No. 86 of 2018, the functions to direct and coordinate actions in support of the family and the protection of children and adolescents were assigned to the Department for Family Policies (which belongs to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers). This Department

contributes, through the management of resources related to the Fund for Family Policies, to the financing of national policies for the family and related promotion campaigns, the functioning of the Observatories and the implementation of the related National Plans, as well as the adoption of specific policies for the family, in agreement with the Unified Conference. In carrying out its functions and responsibilities in the field of family policies, the Department for Family Policies avails itself of the technical and scientific support of the National Observatory on Family, chaired by the Ministry (without portfolio) for equal opportunities and the family.

*(ix) The ways in and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policymaking and reviews*

Civil society is differently involved in family policy making processes. A relevant role is played by the National Observatory for Children and Adolescents, established by law n. 451 of 1997 and further regulated by Decree of the President of the Republic May 14, 2007 n. 103. It has just been re-established on the initiative of the Minister for the Family and Equal Opportunities (March 2020) and has 50 members, representing the various central administrations responsible for policies for children and adolescents, regions, and local authorities, Istat, social partners, institutions, the main bodies operating in the sector, as well as representatives of the third sector and experts in the field. Among the tasks of the Observatory is to prepare, every two years, the National Plan of Action of interventions for the protection of the rights and development of people in developmental age (so-called National Childhood plan), which identifies the priority strategic interventions related to childhood and adolescence in compliance with the contents of the CRC and its Optional Protocols

### **11.5 List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year 2000. For each policy document indicate**

*(i) Whether participation of families and young people has been mentioned in the document*

The National Observatory on Childhood and Adolescence, set up with Law No. 451, dated 23rd December 1997 and regulated by the D.P.R. No. 103, dated 14th May 2007, is bound to elaborate on a biannual basis the National Childhood plan. After consulting the Parliamentary Commission for Infancy/Childhood, the Plan must be approved by the Council of Ministers, adopted with a decree of the President of the Republic, and published in the «Gazzetta Ufficiale».

So far Italy has activated with a considerable delay only four National Childhood plan.

- 1) National Childhood plan 2000-2001 approved with D.P.R. 13th June 2000.
- 2) National Childhood plan 2002-2004 approved with D.P.R. 31st October 2003.

- 3) Third National Childhood plan 2010-2011 approved with D.P.R. 21st January 2011.
- 4) IV National Childhood plan approved with D.P.R. 31st August 2016.

The participation of families and children is ensured thanks to the versatile nature of the fifty members that make up the Observatory, some of whom are associations that represent families and young adults, such as the National Association of Adoptive and Foster Care Families, the Association of Italian Catholic Guides and Scouts, and «ARCI Ragazzi».

*(ii) The extent to which such participation has been implemented*

Even if not expressly stated, an important part in boosting and promoting family support policies is played by The Forum of Family Associations (i.e., a network of associations, e.g. AGESC [Catholic Schools Parents' Association], CIF [Italian Women's Centre] and AGE [Italian Parents' Association]), which was set up in order to promote and safeguard the values and rights of the Family and to recognise the family's rights of citizenship as a protagonist of the social life of the country.

The participation of the children and adolescents is also ensured thanks to the presence in the Observatory of an appointed member of the Italian Authority for Children and Adolescents (AGIA), who in 2018 set up the Youth Council that is made up of nine boys and nine girls who come from lower-secondary and upper-secondary schools, Student Representative Bodies, scout groups, oratories, and sports federations. On the Council Board there is also a foreign unaccompanied minor. It is an important initiative which comes in response to Art. 12 of the CRC because it provides a place where teenager can express their opinions on matters which are of outmost concern to them.

The budget law for 2019 (Law No. 145 of 2018) has set up the National Youths' Council as a body of representation and consultation whose function is to promote and encourage young people's participation and involvement in the political, social, economic, and cultural development of the country.

### **11.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services**

Child and family support policies have gained concrete momentum in Italy thanks to Law No. 285, dated 28th August 1997, *Provisions for the promotion of rights and opportunities in early childhood and adolescence*, and to Law No. 451, dated 23rd December 1997, *Establishment of the Parliamentary Committee on Infancy and of the National Observatory on Childhood*.

Law no. 149, dated 28th March 2001, *Changes to Law No. 184, dated 4th March 1983, concerning the Provisions for child adoption and foster care placement*, has clearly brought to light the extent to which the concrete enactment of children's right to grow up in their own families, in cases when the families cannot ensure adequate levels of care and protection, is connected with the commitment of the institutions (State, Regions, Local bodies). The latter are bound to support families in need also with provisions and measures of a financial nature. Significantly, Art. 79 bis of Law 184/1983 (introduced by Law No. 154/2013, *Revision of the current legislation concerning filiation, according to Art. 2 of Law No. 219, dated 10th December 2012*) requires that the judge should send notes to the local Municipalities about cases of families whose condition of dire need/poverty calls for interventions of support in order to allow children to be brought up within the nucleus of their own families of provenance.

In order to ensure the complete enactment of the rights and interests of persons of minor age, in accordance with Art. 31 of the Constitution and with the related international instruments, with Law No. 122, dated 12th July 2011, the Italian Authority for Children and Adolescents (AGIA) has been established. A complex network has thus been created by involving Regional Authorities for Children and intermediate communities (counselling services, reception centres, associations, schools, and operators) which are able to identify individuals' need for protection thanks to their proximity to and involvement with the social stratum.

(i) *The priorities in child welfare and family policy*

Picking up on the conclusive observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), in the fifth and sixth reports presented by the Italian Government on the state of enactment of the CRC (CRC/C/ITA/CO 5-6 February 2019), the Italian Authority for Children and Adolescents (AGIA) has pointed out on more than one occasion the need to adopt a shared strategy in the promotion of policies on infancy and adolescence, strategy which is to be scaffolded by adequate human and financial resources. Some of the identified priorities are related to the need to bring into focus and give prominence to children's and young persons' rights since they are the ones who are most affected by contexts of economic and educational poverty; the implementation and reinforcement of networks of solidarity and of policies of inclusion in order to plan interventions which can strengthen the systems of prevention, protection, and integration. See the Report of 2016-2020 of the Italian Authority for Children and Adolescents: an evolving reality: <https://www.garanteinfanzia.org/sites/default/files/agia-relazione-2016-2020-web.pdf>).

(ii) *The main types of family provision and support and key features (e.g., different types of cash support (universal and targeted), work-family reconciliation measures and children's/family services, childcare etc.)*

As has already been highlighted in relation to Italian family support policies, what clearly emerges is the critical need to go beyond fragmentation and sectorial intervention. In order to create a unitary and unified framework of interdisciplinary interventions in support of parenting, National Guidelines have been adopted (*National Guidelines for intervention with children and vulnerable families and for the promotion of positive parenting*). In fact, these guidelines encourage rigorous methodology in assessment of children's needs and care planning, enhancing children and families' participation and involving all "the team around the child" in a participative and interdisciplinary perspective.

The text of the Document (which can be consulted on the website: <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/infanzia-e-adolescenza/focus-on/sostegno-alla-genitorialita/Documents/Linee-guida-sostegno-famiglie-vulnerabili-2017.pdf>) completes the guidelines set by *Guidelines for foster care placement* (which can be accessed on the following website <https://www.minori.gov.it/it/minori/linee-guida-laffido>) and *Guidelines for reception in residential child care communities* (<https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/infanzia-e-adolescenza/focus-on/minorenni-fuori-famiglia/Documents/Linee-guida-accoglienza-minorenni.pdf>).

The national Guidelines were preceded by the Programme of Intervention for Prevention of Institutionalization, which, since 2011, in a collaboration between the Italian Ministry of Welfare and the University of Padua, has implemented an innovative intervention strategy to prevent out-of-home child placement and to test approaches to strengthen vulnerable families. Its abbreviation, P.I.P.P.I. was inspired by the fictional character, Pippi Longstocking, a creative and amazingly resilient girl known all over the world. P.I.P.P.I. promotes the full, well-rounded development of the child by proposing new ways to respond to problems connected to poor parenting, which can lead to child neglect, defined as a significant deficiency or a failure to respond to the needs of a child, recognized as fundamental on the grounds of current scientific knowledge (Lacharité, Ethier & Nolin, 2006).

The P.I.P.P.I. and the National Guidelines proposed to respond to children's needs with a collective and interdisciplinary action, also in accordance with what has emerged from the IV National Childhood plan. Some key features have been identified:

**1. Home-care intervention:** carried out by home-care workers in collaboration with parents and children, this in-home activity takes place in the family's home as part of a shared care plan. Practitioners meet with the families approximately twice a week for a minimum of at least four hours a week. The activity does not aim to substitute parents' efforts, but to support parenting capacities and parent-child relationships (e.g., in terms of health, education, care, emotional and cognitive development etc.). Home-care

workers undertake direct interaction with families in order to address their problems and try to modify their behaviour.

**2. Daycare semi-residential service of family support**, to assist the child in the growth and development of his/her personality. The main aims are to provide support to the child in their school career/activities; to foster socialization with one's peers; and to promote participation and integration in extracurricular and free time activities which are available in the child's community bambino.

**3. Voluntary Community Support/ Family helpers:** Each family is provided with a support family or a family helper whose aim is to offer support in concrete aspects of daily life. As this intervention is supplied by volunteers, its frequency and complexity depend on the support family's and family helper's availability and on individual situations. The support family's and family helper's actions aim to reinforce goals identified by care planning strategies (i.e. learning to use social resources, family support organizations and problem solving in daily life, encouraging enjoyable activities with children, etc.).

**4. Parent Groups:** Parents are involved in group activities with other parents. Meetings are weekly or bi-weekly and usually last approximately three hours. Parent group activities aim at fostering reflective practice, and encouraging exchange and interaction between parents. Meetings should address the following issues: (a) the parent-child relationship (emotional warmth, guidance, boundaries, etc.); (b) the parent as a parent (the individual's skills at being a parent, decision making and problem solving, organization of daily life, etc.); (c) the family environment relationship (family and environmental support, local resources, etc.); (d) the relationship with the child (their needs as adults, their history, self-knowledge, self-esteem, etc.).

**5. Partnership between schools/families and social services:** The school (kindergarten, nursery, or primary school) that each child attends is invited to be a full member of the multidisciplinary team working with the family, and to be responsible for its own intervention. Teachers, with the other professionals involved and the families, outline actions (both individualized and involving the entire class) that will favor a positive school environment where children can learn social and emotional competences.

**6. In a multidisciplinary perspective of care/treatment and protection, psychological, neuropsychiatric and other specialised interventions** can be taken into consideration, should they prove to be necessary, based on the children's and parents' specific needs.

An essential action is the financial support provided to the families in order to improve their life standard. The **Inclusion Income** (introduced by Law No. 147, dated 15th September 2017) *Provisions for the introduction of national measures to combat poverty*) has been replaced by the provision of the **Citizens' Income**, brought in with the law decree No. 4 of the 28th of January 2019, and converted by Law No. 26, dated 28th March 2019. It consists in a financial support that purports to integrate low family incomes, which are connected with labour reintegration and social inclusion <sup>14</sup>

Another measure, which has been in place since 2015 and is aimed at combating low birth rates in Italy, is the **Birth Allowance** (also known as **Baby Bonus**), a monthly allowance given to families for each newborn baby, adopted child or child placed in their pre-adoption foster care. The allowance is annual and is given on a monthly basis until the baby turns one or for a year after the child has entered the new family nucleus, both in the case of adoption and of pre-adoption foster care placement.

*(iii) The types of funding involved such as state, charity vs private sector providers and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners*

There is general agreement on the fact that combating inequality and social disadvantage requires an efficient channel of communication between the public and the private systems, which can enhance the value of networks of volunteers. An illustrative example is the fruitful experience of the 'Istituto degli Innocenti di Firenze'; one of the earliest Italian institutions dedicated to the safeguarding of childhood, which today is a Public Company of Services for Persons (see <https://www.istitutodeglinnocenti.it>).

What appears therefore of fundamental importance is the Third Sector, which involves non-governmental institutions and non-profit organisations and associations that are value-driven, whose purpose is to achieve social goals and improve public welfare rather than follow profit-based goals. In order to set down clear rules concerning this sector of social and economic life of growing importance, Italy has adopted with Law No. 117 of 2017, the Code of the Third Sector that is one of the pillars of the Reform of the Third Sector, as defined by Law No. 106 of 2016, Authorisation to the Government for the reform of the Third Sector, of the social enterprise and for the provision of universal civil service. Despite being an important regulation, it still waits

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<sup>14</sup> (see <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/poverta-ed-esclusione-sociale/focus-on/Reddito-di-cittadinanza/Pagine/default.aspx>).

to be implemented. In particular, the request for the authorisation of the fiscal provisions contained in the Code of the Third Sector has not been yet sent to the European Commission. The decree has not been issued on the Central Record (RUNTS) yet.

*(iv) Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations*

Art. 8 (*Service of information, promotion, counselling, monitoring and technical support*) of Law No. 285 of the 28th of August 1997, *Provisions for the promotion of rights and opportunities for early childhood and adolescence*, requires the activation of a service of information, promotion, counselling, monitoring, and technical support in the Department for Social Affairs of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in order to implement the final aims of the above-mentioned law. With this purpose in mind, the department called the Department for family policies (<http://famiglia.governo.it/it/>) uses the data provided by the National Centre for record-keeping/data collection and analysis of childhood (See, <https://www.minori.gov.it/it/chiamo>). The IV National Childhood plan, set down by the *National Observatory on Childhood and Adolescence* ([https://www.minori.gov.it/sites/default/files/Quarto\\_Piano\\_infanzia.pdf](https://www.minori.gov.it/sites/default/files/Quarto_Piano_infanzia.pdf)), has underlined the seriousness of the issue in a context like the Italian one in which welfare policies are delegated to the Regions, where the fragmentation of the duties in the enactment of the interventions in support of the families and minors takes place at an institutional level and in the gaps between systems and services.

This complex situation obviously has an effect on the systems of assessment of the policies of investment into early childhood and into the support provided to parents. What we are witnessing is an overlap of various systems of monitoring with a negative impact on time and resources.

In addition to the investigations carried out by the *National Observatory on Childhood and Adolescence* and by the Regional Centres for *Childhood and Adolescence* (see for e.g. the one of Tuscany Region: <https://www.minoritoscana.it>), the annual Reports of the Italian Authority for Children and Adolescents need to be mentioned (the latter can be consulted on: <https://www.garanteinfanzia.org/sites/default/files/agia-relazione-parlamento-2019-web.pdf>); the Report of the Regions and Autonomous Provinces on the monitoring of family policies (See: [http://famiglia.governo.it/media/1454/minori\\_rapporto\\_monitoraggio\\_reg\\_190328.pdf](http://famiglia.governo.it/media/1454/minori_rapporto_monitoraggio_reg_190328.pdf)); the Report of the Municipalities on the monitoring of family policies ([http://famiglia.governo.it/media/1453/minori\\_monitoraggio\\_comuni\\_190403.pdf](http://famiglia.governo.it/media/1453/minori_monitoraggio_comuni_190403.pdf)); the sample surveys on foster care placement and social services «Children and adolescents hosted in Italy» Carried out by «Istituto degli Innocenti» in collaboration with Ministry of Labour and Social Security ([https://www.minori.gov.it/sites/default/files/idi\\_questionidocumenti\\_66\\_191024.pdf](https://www.minori.gov.it/sites/default/files/idi_questionidocumenti_66_191024.pdf)); the 10th Report of Updates on the monitoring of the Convention of the Work Team for the

Convention on the rights of childhood and adolescence (a network of 100 organisations and institutions of the Third Sector, coordinated by Save the Children Italy), which have long been actively involved in the promotion and safeguard of the rights of childhood and adolescence (<http://gruppocrc.net/documento/10-rapporto-crc/>).

Law No. 107 of 2020, *Establishment of a Parliamentary Commission of Investigation, which surveils the activities connected with group homes that host minors. Provisions concerning the minor's right to have a family*, assigns to the Commission of Investigation the task of checking the number of measures issued by the Juvenile Court aimed at limiting parental responsibility also by removal of the children from their natural parents' care and their placement in foster care families (Art. 3).

(v) *Limitations in national and official data and statistics*

What has emerged from various reports of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the deficiency of the Italian data-collecting system, especially when it comes to particularly vulnerable groups. In the Final Observations of 2003, 2006, 2011, and 2019 addressed to the Italian Government, it demands that Italy should guarantee an efficient national information system, ensuring that all the necessary human, technical and financial resources are made available. All the indications can be found on this website: <http://gruppocrc.net/area-tematica/la-raccolta-dati/>

The limitations/flaws of the system have emerged above all in cases of removal of the children from their families of provenance. The Italian Authority for Children and Adolescents (AGIA) has repeatedly drawn attention to the absence of a national database that may offer a complete and updated report on the children who have been estranged from their families<sup>15</sup>

The latest data is contained in a report issued by the Ministry of Labour that is based on the figures provided by the Regions and Autonomous Provinces and on the numbers used by the AGIA, which come from the Prosecutor's Office at the Juvenile Court.

According to the Report of the Ministry, at the end of 2017, the number of the children and adolescents placed in foster care in Italy was 14.219 (the numbers do not consider the foreign unaccompanied minors); in the same year, the minors hosted in group homes and communities were 12.892: making up a total of 27.111; 37, 4 % of the young individuals placed

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<sup>15</sup> (<https://www.garanteinfanzia.org/sites/default/files/agia-relazione-parlamento-2019-web.pdf>).

in foster care returned home. By contrast, among those who had been placed in communities/group homes only 21,8% returned to their families (<https://www.lavoro.gov.it/documenti-e-norme/studi-e-statistiche/Documents/Quaderni%20della%20Ricerca%20Sociale%2046,%20Rilevazione%20dati%20bambini%20e%20ragazzi%20in%20affidamento%20anno%202017/QRS-46-Rilevazione-Coordinata-Anno-2017.pdf>).

According to the data provided by the AGIA, between December 31<sup>st</sup> 2014, and December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017, the number of minors in communities has increased from 22.975 to 32.185, figures which do not match with those of the Ministry of Labour because they include foreign unaccompanied minors.

### **11.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision. What are the prominent policy and practice developments related to family support services from children's rights, social equality and evidence-informed perspectives?**

Lots of hopes are raised by Bill No. 51, which reads *Authorisation of the government to adopt the universal allowance and the introduction of measures in favour of support to the families* (c.d. Family Act), approved on June 11, 2020, by the Council of following the proposals of the Minister for Equal Opportunities and Family and the Minister of Labour and Social Services.

It is a well-balanced bill containing measures tailored to the needs of families with children, and which takes into account the suggestions that have emerged from the ongoing interdisciplinary debates among experts of sociology, pedagogy, psychology, jurisprudence and medicine. The aim is to support parenthood and the social and educational function of the families, combat low birth rates, boost children's and young adults' harmonious growth, promoting the balance between work and family life, with special regard to women. On a practical level, the Government makes a commitment to introduce a universal monthly allowance for each dependent child until the reaching of adulthood, without a limit of age for disabled sons and daughters; to strengthen policies of family support for school expenses and for sports and cultural activities; to reform parental leave by extending it to all categories of workers, and add a structured mandatory paternity leave; introduce incentives for women's labour and employment, ranging from deductions for care services to smart working.

(i) *What are the pressing policy, practice and research challenges impeding developments?*

The longstanding social and economic crisis has had a great negative impact on the activities of social services ranging from schools to all the organisations and institutions whose goal is to promote childhood and to support vulnerable families. This impact is most visible in the serious

obstacles encountered in the interventions concerning the protection of children's and adolescents' rights.

Even the most recent significant provisions which are based on a project of anthropological promotion of one's dignity and the quality of life in its day-to-day and family dimension (for instance, Law No. 71 of the 29th of May 2017, *Provisions for prevention and the safeguard of minors against the phenomenon of cyberbullying*), are accompanied by the caveat of not overburdening the public finances.

(ii) *What are the pressing gaps in provision?*

Only the concrete and full implementation of all the articles of the Family Act, which is linked to the commitment and the political stability of the present government, can lead to a long-term planning of the interventions aimed at strengthening the systems of protection, integration, and inclusion of the families. In order to guarantee an adequate social response to the children's and their families' needs, it is necessary to guarantee a universal application/distribution of economic benefits, taking into account the family's income and the number of dependent children. So as to increase the social value of educational and learning activities it is fundamental that tax concessions/fiscal facilities be applied or financial aid be provided.

## 11.8 References

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## 12 LATVIA- National report on family support policy & provision

**Aivita Putnina**

### 12.1 Trends and issues related to demography

*Fertility rates \* Include data from Excel Sheet for the following years: 2010, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 (where available). Short comment about Trends*

Table 1. *Fertility rate*

Year	Total fertility rate
2010	1.364
2015	1.707
2016	1.743
2017	1.699
2018	1.612
2019	1.612

*Note:* Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia data, <https://www.csb.gov.lv/lv/statistika/statistikas-temas/iedzivotaji/dzimstiba/galvenie-raditaji/dzimstibas-koeficienti>

The fertility rate started a significant decrease in 1987 (2.207) reaching 1.114 in 1998. The decrease coincides with the economic turmoil and uncertainty after the fall of the USSR and re-establishment of independence. It started to rise slowly during the economic growth since 2000, which was subsequently interrupted by the economic crisis of 2008. After 2011 a targeted

nativity support policy<sup>16</sup> aimed at having a third child in the family was designed and has contributed to an increase in the fertility rate since 2012. In 2018 policy measures declined, followed by a lower birth rate.

*Families with children by number of children \**

Include data from Excel Sheet for the following years: 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015. Short comment about Trends

Table 2. Household composition

Year	Household composed of one adult	Household composed of one adult with dependent children	Household composed of two adults	Household composed of two adults with dependent children	Household composed of three or more adults	Household composed of three or more adults with dependent children
2010	31	6.3	25.3	19.7	9	8.6
2015	30.9	4.9	27.6	19.3	9.5	7.9

Note: Eurostat Database (2020).

According to the 2011 population count, families with children are structured as follows: 64% - families with one child; 28% - with two children; 7,6% - with three children.

The household consumption survey of 2019 (CSB, 2020) shows that an average household is composed of 2.27 persons, showing a decrease since 2016 (2.33 persons). However, households without children contribute to the decrease in average household size. In addition, households in rural areas (2,47 persons) tend to be larger than in urban areas (2.18 persons).

<sup>16</sup> Ģimenes valsts politikas pamatnostādnes 2011. –2017.gadam; <https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/latvijas-politikas-planosanas-dokumenti>

*Percentage of the population from 0 to 18 \**

Include data from Excel Sheet for the following years: 2010, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 (where available). Short comment about Trends

Table 3. *Percentage of the population aged 0-18*

Year	%
2010	20.6
2015	19.4
2016	19.6
2017	20.0
2018	20.6
2019	20.5

Note: CBS data.

The percentage reflects the fluctuation of the birth rate.

*Percentage of population over working (retiring) age \**

Include data from Excel Sheet for the following years: 2010, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 (where available). Short comment about Trends

Table 4. *Percentage of population over working (retiring) age*

Year	%
2010	18.1

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2015	19.4
2016	19.6
2017	19.9
2018	20.1
2019	20.3

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Note: CBS data.

The population over retirement age is steadily increasing and is expected so. Latvia is the tenth country in the world with the largest aging population. The main causes for the rapid aging process are the lack of generational replacement and migration (Bērziņš, 2019).

#### *Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities \**

Identify vulnerable groups as documented in the social policy literature

In 2018 Latvians comprised 62.2% of population, Russians – 25.2%, Byelorussians – 3.2%, Ukrainians – 2,2% (CSB, 2019). The absolute number of all ethnic groups is decreasing due to migration and low birth rate. Since the 1990s, the percentage of Latvian population has increased (52,0% in 1989) partly due to the evacuation of Soviet troops and migration. During the Soviet period Russification policy, the share of Latvians had significantly decreased (75.5% in 1935). In consequence, the Latvian population is ethnically divided, causing political soreness also since a part of Latvian Russian-speaking population did not apply for Latvian citizenship and held “alien” or non-citizen status passports instead. Only in 2020, the legal provision was made to automatically confer Latvian citizenship to all children who are born in Latvia and whose parents are non-citizens. Special governmental support is given to Roma population, especially in education sector. A dedicated governmental programme facilitating Latvian and minority youth cooperation is run through the Societal Integration Fund – a governmental agency<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> See Mazākumtautību un latviešu jauniešu sadarbības programma 2020 [Programme for collaboration between Latvian and ethnic minority youth 2020]. At [https://www.sif.gov.lv/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&id=429&Itemid=280&lang=lv](https://www.sif.gov.lv/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=429&Itemid=280&lang=lv)

*Migration patterns* \*

Include immigration and emigration statistics.

Immigration by age group, sex and level of human development of the country of previous residence

Table 5. *Immigration and emigration*

Migration patterns	International long-term migration by country group 2018		
IBG020	Emigration	EU-28	13231
		EFTA	1048
		other countries	1520
		..CIS	1125
	Immigration	EU-28	4488
		EFTA	246
		other countries	6069
		..CIS	4022

Note: CBS Latvia data.

Accession to the EU contributed to a new wave of migration, with Great Britain and Ireland being the most popular target countries (Krišjāne et al, 2019: 188). Economic reasons prevail as motivation factors, and migration has intensified in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis (ibid: 188). Population surveys show that 14.3% of respondents have migration

experience. Since 2013 the government implemented a National Remigration Policy<sup>18</sup> assisting Latvian nationals to return. Migration and depopulation are considered major national problems.

## 12.2 Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles and children's living arrangements

### *Family household types \**

Table 6. *Households according to demographic type (%)*

Year	One person 16-64 years	One person 65 and older	Couple without children	An adult with children	Couple with one child	Couples with two children	Couple with 3 and more children	Other households with children	Other households without children
2010	14.4	14.9	16.5	4.0	7.5	4.3	1.2	12.7	24.5
2015	14.5	16.3	19.4	3.2	6.8	5.0	1.4	11.0	22.3
2016	14.5	16.3	19.2	3.7	7.3	5.2	1.5	10.4	22.0
2017	15.6	17.3	19.5	3.8	7.4	5.4	1.8	8.9	20.3
2018	17.4	17.5	18.7	3.8	7.3	5.3	2.0	8.8	19.3
2019	18.2	17.1	19.6	3.6	7.2	5.9	2.0	8.3	18.

Note: CBS Latvia data.

<sup>18</sup> Reemigrācijas atbalsta pasākumu plāns 2013.–2016. gadam [Reimmigration support plan 2013-2016]. At <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/258715-par-reemigrācijas-atbalsta-pasākumu-planu-20132016gadam>

After regaining independence, families with one child dominate among families with more children (64% in 2011). Families with three children decreased from 9.7% in 2000 to 7.6 % in 2011 (Āboliņa, 2019: 92). Āboliņa (ibid.) points at the success of the third child-oriented policy – in 2016, 14.6% of children were born as third children but she cautions politicians of the necessity to support the birth of second children as well.

*Marriage and divorce rates \**

Table 7. *Crude marriage rates*

Year	%
2010	4.4
2015	6.9
2016	6.6
2017	6.8
2018	6.8

*Note: CBS Latvia data*

Since the 1990s, the Latvian CMR has fallen by half (3.9 at its lowest). It has not yet reached the level of the 1980s (9.8 in 1981). Research suggests that marriage rate is sustained mainly by re-marriage, and first marriage is being delayed (Putniņa et al. 2015: 50-51).

Table 8. *Crude marriage rates*

Year	%
2010	2.4
2015	2.6

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2016	3.1
2017	3.1
2018	3.1

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Note: CBS Latvia data

Increase in divorce rate is observable from 2011 when the divorce procedure was eased.

*Lone-parent families \**

According to CSB (2020), a single parent with one and more children was the most popular family type – 22.3%. The percentage of single-parent families has increased, especially that of single mothers. The report mentions several factors contributing to the rise of the share of lone-parent families with children – high divorce rates, high birth rate outside marriage, and migration of young people and especially males (more than a quarter of all outside migration comprise men aged 25-44).

*New family forms such as same-sex couple households \**

No national data available. Recognition of same-sex couples is still problematic. A major benchmark in the legislation became the ruling of Constitutional Court of Latvia of November 12, 2020<sup>19</sup> recognizing the legitimacy of rights of same-sex couples' second parent (woman) to paternity leave, and recommending the parliament to evaluate legal regulation in relation to same-sex couples.

*Family structures and changes across social groups \**

According to the 2011 population count (CBS, 2016), 32% of families are composed of married couples with children; 21,2% married couples without children; 7,8% - unregistered couples with children; 5,3% - unregistered couples without children; 29,1% - single mothers with children; and 4,3% - single fathers with children. Research shows that regional differences in birth rate (comparatively higher in Latvian and Roma ethnic groups) have an impact on family size.

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<sup>19</sup> See [https://www.satv.tiesa.gov.lv/web/viewer.html?file=https://www.satv.tiesa.gov.lv/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/2019-33-01\\_Spriedums-3.pdf](https://www.satv.tiesa.gov.lv/web/viewer.html?file=https://www.satv.tiesa.gov.lv/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/2019-33-01_Spriedums-3.pdf)

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### *Children and youth living in institutions \**

According to the Ministry of Welfare, in 2017, 276 children lived in state social care institutions, and 225 of them had some form of disability reflecting poor support to families with disabled family members. In municipal or other social care centres resided 875 children, 86 of them with disability. The number of the centres overall is decreasing as well as the number of children residing there. The current government has made an effort over the last two years to place children in alternative care and close care institutions after public outcry of the situation in the institutions.

### *Children in out-of-home care such as foster care \**

According to The State Inspectorate for Protection of Children's Rights<sup>20</sup>, at the end of 2018 6438 children were not receiving parental care. 68% of children without parental care were placed with guardians, 20% in foster families, and 12% in long-term social care and social rehabilitation institutions.

### *Home-based support \**

Municipal social services can provide a family assistant to improve social skills in the family or assist in solving problems. However, the service is limited and available to high-risk families only. In 2017 a pilot project on early violence prevention was introduced in Riga's maternity hospital, providing support to mothers who encountered difficulties associated with birth but were not considered at social risk. Assistant service is available for particular groups of disabled children; however, payment does not cover the costs of care, it is extensively controlled, and most parents use it as an addition to a disability benefit. Palliative care at home is available for children<sup>21</sup>.

## **12.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare**

### *Poverty rates \**

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<sup>20</sup> See <https://lvportals.lv/dienaskartiba/303344-arpusgimenes-aprupe-esoso-bernu-skaitis-turpina-samazinaties-2019>

<sup>21</sup> See <http://www.vmnvd.gov.lv/uploads/files/5e09b9bd08fa2.pdf>

Table 9. *Poverty rates*

	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
At risk of poverty rate (cut-off point: 60% of median equivalised income after social transfers)	20.9	22.5	21.8	22.1	23.3	22.9
People at risk of poverty or social exclusion	38.2	30.9	28.5	28.2	28.4	27.3

Note. Eurostat

*Employment/unemployment rates \**

Table 10. *Employment/unemployment rates*

	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Employment	52.0	60.8	61.6	62.9	64.5	65.0
Unemployment	19.5	9.9	9.6	8.7	7.4	6.3

Note. CBS Latvia data

*Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage related to gender, age, ethnicity,  
migrant status and other social dimensions \**

The Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia (2020) report states that in the last decade a higher share of pre-retirement age people is represented in the labour market. In 2019, the employment rate for age group 50 - 64 years was 71,6%. The employment rate in the age group of 15-64 was 72,3% in 2019. The employment rate for women in Latvia in this age group is lower than for men (70.7% and 73.9% respectively), however, it is significantly higher than the EU average.

According to the Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia (2019) report, the youth (aged 15-24) unemployment rate in Latvia was among the highest in the EU following the economic crisis of 2008 but has fallen substantially in recent years, from 36.2% in 2010 to 12.2% in 2018 (3% lower than the EU average).

*Patterns of education disadvantage \**

OECD (2018) named gender inequality as the main concern of the Latvian education system: 10% of women and 19% of men do finish secondary education level (EU average 14% and 17%). While 65% of university graduates are women, women with higher education earned 80% of average men's salaries.

*Major social welfare trends such as disadvantage risks, welfare benefit receipt levels \**

According to Kristapsone (2019:119), an important factor influencing family welfare is the adult:child ratio in the household. The highest income is observable in employed single person and couples without children households; lowest - in single-parent families with at least one child and two-parent families with three and more children. CSB (2019) states that in 2019 the at-risk-of-poverty rate has increased for families with children, especially those with lone parent (30.6%), but also in families with two adults and two children (12.8%), and with three and more children (17.7%). However, lone seniors (above 65) are the at most risk group – 71.7% live at risk of poverty. Also, lone persons under the age of 64 are subjected to higher risks (30%). The same report states that the role of social transfers has increased in balancing income.

*Housing problems \**

Table 10. *Overcrowding*

	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Overcrowding rate	55.7	39.8	41.4	43.2	41.9	42.2
Overcrowding rate, households with children under 18	71.1	57.5	60.2	59.0	59.2	57.7

Note. CBS Latvia data

As stated by the Latvian government, almost half of Latvian families cannot afford energy-efficient and qualitative housing. The OECD (2015) report points at overcrowded housing among low and middle-level income households. Rental market lacks new developments. This is partly a result of the de-nationalization of private property; land and immobile property after re-gaining independence is still causing a problematic relationship between long-term renters and property owners. Municipal housing is insufficient. OECD in 2020 states<sup>22</sup> that housing affordability and quality are still challenging in Latvia. Latvian households are of poor quality, residential investment has stagnated since 2008, and the rental market is underdeveloped. In addition, public support for housing is insufficient and excludes many people. Around 44% of Latvian households are ineligible for housing support and cannot afford a mortgage to buy a home of their own.

*Summary: The broader socio-economic context and trends which influences children's, parental and family circumstances and environments \**

After regaining independence, changes in social security, values and employment patterns have changed the family structure - partnerships outside wedlock became socially but not legally acceptable, above 40% of children (but most of first children) are born out of wedlock, however, policy remained conservative, holding the assumption that the state should support the traditional family. The family policy of the second decade of the 21st century focused on supporting working parents, shifting benefits to the tax system; the low-income families and single parents with several children could not use those as their salaries were not high enough. Families with disabled children struggle through rather low benefits and lack of assistance services as well as a still largely non-inclusive education system; however, the situation is gradually improving, with the state heading towards de-institutionalization.

#### **12.4 The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions, and actors' which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision**

*Membership to the EU \**

Yes

*Relationship with European Union \* (not more than 10 lines)*

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<sup>22</sup> Launch of the OECD report: Policy Actions for Housing Affordability in Latvia.  
<https://www.oecd.org/latvia/launch-of-oecd-report-policy-actions-for-housing-affordability-in-latvia-june-2020.htm>

Joined the EU in 2004.

*Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy*  
\* (not more than 10 lines)

Family policy in recent decade mostly capitalized by nationalist wing party (so-called National Union). Though in position, it has lost places and influence in the Parliament during the last election. Most of family policy has been framed as demography improvement and aimed at rising birth rate. Since 2017 there is no long-term family policy active in Latvia. A new policy document is in the making; therefore it has not yet been released for public discussions at the time of writing this report.

*Influential lobbying groups* \* (not more than 10 lines)

Two opposing kinds of NGO actors are active in the field: conservatives backing “natural” and traditional families and value of marriage in creating families (included major Christian denominations; NGO “Asociācija Ģimene”) and NGOs working in violence prevention, gender equality, and family/parental support (resource centre “Marta”, “Dardedze”, “Skalbes”, “Parades Zieds”). NGOs representing families with three and more children and foster families are also active in advocating their interests.

*Influential policy/research networks* \* (Name them if available)

A group of scientists from demography, social geography, sociology and anthropology collaborate on state programmes concerning population growth, which is the main driver behind the family policy. Prof Juris Krūmiņš (University of Latvia) has headed several projects, among those “Population Reproduction and Challenges for Renewal of Society in Latvia” (2019).

*The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support* \* (not more than 10 lines)

The Ministry of Welfare is the institution responsible for family policy and overall regulations of social support. Local government organizes the actual support except for social care institutions for children with a disability which are also covered by the state budget. The last policy document in the area ceased to be active in 2017, and since then there was no long-term family policy implemented. Also, interest in developing family support has decreased in the latest years.

Most of the current debates are centred around partnership regulation which would also allow for same-sex partnerships, but it does not have the support of the majority in parliament. Conservative politics has virtually banned sex education from the schools.

*The democratic system and main political parties; (unitary vs federal state structures; centralised vs decentralised structures) \**

Latvia has a parliamentary representative democratic republic system, whereby the Prime Minister is the head of government, and of a multi-party system. The President holds a primarily ceremonial role as Head of State. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and parliament: the Saeima. Local governments are currently undergoing reform and those are delegated the responsibility to provide family support services, while universal support to the families is nationally organized.

*The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular (e.g., Ministry roles, national vs local/regional government roles) \**

Local governments are currently undergoing reform and those are delegated the responsibility to provide family support services while universal support to the families is nationally organized.

*The ways in and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policymaking and reviews \* (not more than 10 lines)*

Until 2017 when there was a family policy the ministry published yearly monitoring reports and stakeholders were invited to formulate it in 2010.

### **12.5 List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year 2000. For each policy document indicate**

*Whether participation of families and young people has been mentioned in the document \**

State family policy (strategy, action plans) 2011-2017: no

State family policy (concept paper, action plans) 2004-2013: no

*The extent to which such participation has been implemented \* (not line limit here)*

None

### **12.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services**

*The priorities in child welfare and family policy \**

#### **1. Family planning:**

- To increase the personal income tax relief rate for dependents;

- Support for housing for economically active families;
- Introduction of support in cases of interrupting unplanned pregnancies [reads as limiting access to abortion], negative childbirth experience, child loss, infertility treatment support;
- Promotion of healthy lifestyle and education about risks diminishing fertility;
- State support to infertility treatment;
- Popularise adoption;
- Improving registration system of new-borns;
- Preventing child traumatism;
- Facilitate early registration for antenatal care.

2. Support to parenting (reconciliation of work and family life; accessibility of services to families; diminishing risks to the emotional and physical integrity of a child)

- Increase variability of childcare services (short-term care options, nanny services);
- Increase availability of kindergartens;
- Offer consultative support to families and pedagogues;
- Organize out-of-school vocational activities for children;
- Organize family-friendly business movement, leisure activities;
- Flexible work schedule of institutions for families;
- Popularize actual implementation of legal labour rights of parents;
- Facilitate employment after child-care leave;
- Prioritise parents in seeking employment;
- Provide parenting courses free of charge;
- Provide free school meals for grades 1-4;
- Support to families with disabled children (inclusive education, rehabilitation, etc.)

*The main types of family provision and support and key features (e.g., different types of cash support (universal and targeted, work-family reconciliation measures and children's/family services, childcare etc) \* (no line limit here)*

1. Universal, also in amount:

- Childbirth allowance
- State family benefit
- Supplement to the state family benefit for a disabled child

2. linked to social insurance

- Maternity benefit (56 or 70 days (twins) 80 % of pre-taxed salary
- Childcare benefit - 60 % (one year) or 43.75 % (1,5 years) of pre-taxed salary.
- Working/ self-employed parent receives 30 % of the benefit.

Labour law also provides certain benefits for employed parents (additional holidays for parents with three or more children, breastfeeding breaks for nursing mothers, shorter work hours for parents with young children; however, implementation is problematic.

*The types of funding involved such as state, charity vs private sector providers and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners \**

School is mostly provided by local governments with education costs being covered by the national budget for children since the age of five. The state also provides services of specialists (psychologist, social pedagogue) at school, as well as 10 consultations of a psychologist, and social rehabilitation for victims of violence.

Also, a private education network exists, with some municipalities covering part of the costs for parents when municipal childcare options are lacking.

Availability of support varies through different municipalities from virtually any to well-covered options. These services are provided by NGOs and include different parenting support programmes, violence prevention programmes, support for social risk parents.

*Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations\**

Policy monitoring is entrusted to experts. The latest report shows a rather critical evaluation of the last programme.

*Limitations in national and official data and statistics \**

There are virtually no data on the diversity of families and their interrelatedness with socio-economic conditions.

**12.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision. What are the prominent policy and practice developments related to family support services from children's rights, social equality and evidence-informed perspectives?**

*What are the pressing policy, practice and research challenges impeding developments? \**

The Covid-19 pandemic emergency showed that initially, the government took measures not accounting for families with children and only after critique, dependents were considered when calculating stand-still benefits. Also, high poverty rates did hit families with children, especially in rural areas, where distant learning opportunities were limited due to the lack of infrastructure and appliances.

A new family policy is currently on the agenda.

*What are the pressing gaps in provision? \**

The policy is natality-rate driven and focusses on economically active families, leaving less advantaged families behind. The weak points according to research are: still low family support benefits, implementation of reconciliation of family and work-life provisions, as well as cutting off children from state-funded health care at age of 18 when they are still in the last year of their secondary education, combined with the highest out-of-pocket payments for health-care. Additionally, the state covers only half of the students in higher education by compensating the fees, but the study loan system is underdeveloped and largely unavailable for families with many children. Education and healthcare are the most important challenges for the families.

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## 13 LITHUANIA - National report on family support policy & provision

### Arturas Tereskinas

#### 13.1 Trends and issues related to demography

- *Fertility rates \* Include data from Excel Sheet for the following years: 2010, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 (where available). Short comment about Trends*

As can be observed, the fertility rates in Lithuania declined after the country regained its independence in the 1990s. In the data available from 2018, it was at 1.63. Thus, the total fertility rate is below replacement fertility rates in Lithuania (Table 1).

Table 1

Year	Total fertility rate
1980	1.99
1990	2.02
2000	1.27
2010	1.50
2014	1.63
2015	1.70
2016	1.69
2017	1.63
2018	1.63

*Note.* Statistics Lithuania, Demographic Yearbook 2019

- *Families with children by number of children*

According to the population count of 2011, Lithuania had 362.7 thousand families with children under 18 (42.1% of all families). The number of families shrank by 10.5 % since 2001. 58.2 % families were with one child, 33.7% - with two children, 8.1 % - with three and more children. Since 2001, the family size shrank from 3.18 individual to 3.03 individual.

Size of household with children: 76% two parents including 12,41% out of wedlock, 24% single-parent families; of those 85% mother- and 15% father-headed households (Lithuanian 2011 Population Census) (Table 2).

Table 2

Year	Household composed of one adult	Household composed of one adult with dependent children	Household composed of two adults	Household composed of two adults with dependent children	Household composed of three or more adults	Household composed of three or more adults with dependent children
2010	30,6	5,7	22,6	26	7,7	7,5
2015	34,9	6,2	25,2	21	7,3	5,4

Note. Eurostat Database (2020)

- *Percentage of the population from 0 to 18*

In 2019, 15.1% of population was 0-14 years old. The working age population refers to persons aged from 16 to the old-age pension set by the Law on State Social Insurance Pensions of the Republic of Lithuania. Children under the age of 18 according to household type in the 2011 census was 18.4%. Children aged 0-17 at the beginning of 2019 was 17.9 % (Table 3).

Table 3

Year	%
2010	22.3
2011	21.9
2012	21.5
2013	21.0
2014	20.6
2015	20.4
2016	20.3
2017	20.2
2018	20.1
2019	20.0

Note. Statistics Lithuania 2020

- *Percentage of population over working (retiring) age \**

In 2019, 19.8 % of Lithuanian population was over the age of 65 (Table 4).

Table 4

Year	%
2010	17.3
2011	17.9

2012	18.1
2013	18.2
2014	18.4
2015	18.7
2016	19.0
2017	19.3
2018	19.3
2019	19.8

Note. Statistics Lithuania 2020

Table 5. Age-dependency ratio (65+/15-64)

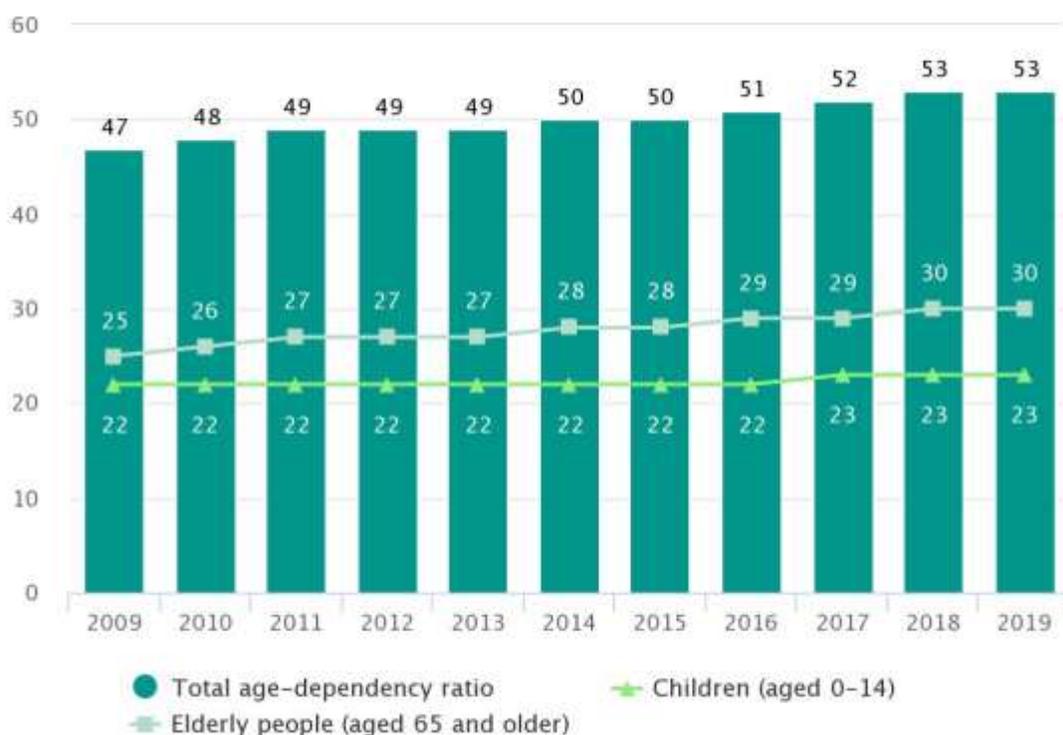
Year	%
2010	25.6
2011	26.6
2012	26.9
2013	27.2
2014	27.5
2015	28.1
2016	28.6

2017	29.3
2018	30.1
2019	20.4

Note. Statistics Lithuania 2020

### Age-dependency ratios, 2009–2019

Figure 1. Children (aged 0–14) or elderly people (aged 65 and older) per 100 population aged 15–64, beginning of the year



Note. Statistics Lithuania 2020.

- *Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities:*

(Identify vulnerable groups as documented in the social policy literature)

Ethnic Lithuanians (86.4 %) dominate the population of Lithuania. According to the 2019 data of Statistics Lithuania, Lithuanians made up 86.4 per cent; Poles – 5.7 per cent; Russians – 4.5 per cent; Belarusians – 1.5 per cent; Ukrainians – 1 per cent; and people of other ethnicities – 0.9 per cent. The laws of the Republic of Lithuania guarantee the national minorities residing in Lithuania the right to state or state-supported pre-school institutions, general education schools, and classes in their native language. If the national groups are small and constitute a minority of the population in the area, classes and optional courses as well as Saturday/Sunday schools can be established in state general education schools, with a view to enable the people belonging to the national minorities to learn and improve their native language (Table 6).

Table 6

Ethnicity	%
Lithuanians	86.4
Russians	4.5
Poles	5.7
Belarussians	1.5
Ukrainians	1
Jews	0.1
Latvians	0.1
Tatars	0.1
Romanies	0.1
Germans	0.1

Other 0.4

Note. Population by ethnicity, 2019, Statistics Lithuania

- *Migration patterns;*

(Include immigration and emigration statistics)

In 2018, the majority (72.9%) of emigrants declared their departure to the EU countries.

12,200 (37.7 per cent) of all emigrants chose the United Kingdom as their destination of emigration; Germany was chosen by 3,200 (9.8 per cent); Norway – 3,000 (9.3 per cent); and Ireland – 2,000 (6.3 per cent). Compared to 2017, the number of emigrants to the United Kingdom decreased by 9,400 (1.8 times), Germany – 967 (23.4 per cent), Norway – 2,000 (1.7 times), Ireland – 1,300 (1.7 times) (Table 7).

Table 7. *International migration, 2009–2018*

	Emigration	Immigration	Net international migration	Crude emigration rate (per 1 000 population)	Crude immigration rate (per 1 000 population)	Crude net international migration rate (per 1 000 population)
2018	32 206	28 914	–3 292	11.5	10.3	–1.2
2017	47 925	20 368	–27 557	16.9	7.2	–9.7
2016	50 333	20 162	–30 171	17.5	7.0	–10.5
2015	44 533	22 130	–22 403	15.3	7.6	–7.7

Note. Statistics Lithuania 2019

## 13.2 Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles and children’s living arrangements

- *Family household types*

Population by household type according to 2011 census:

- Spouses 38.9%
- Cohabitants- 5%
- Children aged under 18 – 18.4%
- Living alone 13.3 %
- Lone mothers or fathers with children – 3.6%
- Others -20.8%

*Note.* Statistics Lithuania. Households and families, their living conditions (2011)

- *Marriage and divorce rates*

Table 8. *Crude marriage rates*

Year	%
2010	6.0
2011	6.3
2012	6.9
2013	6.9
2014	7.6
2015	7.5

2016	7.4
2017	7.5
2018	7.0

Note. Statistics Lithuania

Table 9

	Marriages per 1,000 inhabitants	Divorces per 1,000 inhabitants	Total divorce rate	Average duration of marriage
2018	7.0	3.1	0.39	12.8

Note. Statistics of Lithuania

- *lone-parent families*

3.6 % according to 2011 census.

- *New family forms such as same-sex couple households*

Same sex couples are not registered. Thus, there is no information available about same-sex couple households.

- *Family structures and changes across social groups*

The medium household was 2.38 persons in 2011, and has diminished from 2.55 persons per household in 2001. 31.7 per cent of households were one-person households, 62 per cent – two to four-person households. Households consisting of five or more members made up 6.3 per cent of all households.

54.2 per cent of families were comprised of one-family households, consisting of spouses or cohabitants without children, spouses or cohabitants with children under 18, or lone parents with children under 18. 44.1 per cent of family households were other family households, consisting of spouses or cohabitants with or without children and with other persons, or lone parents with children and with other persons. A small part (1.7 per cent) of family households

was made up of households consisting of two and more families. 41.3 per cent of families had two; 28.1 per cent – three; 21.3 per cent – four; 9.3 per cent – five and more members.

Non-family households, consisting of one person or a group of persons who are not in kin or marital relationships, made up 32 per cent of all households (405.9 thousand). In 2001, non-family households made up 29.1 per cent of all households (394.2 thousand).

*Note.* Statistics Lithuania. Households and families, their living conditions (2011)

- *Children and youth living in institutions*

Table 10

Year	Number of childcare institutions at the end of year   units <sup>1</sup>	Number of children in childcare institutions at the end of the year   persons <sup>2</sup>	Number of places in childcare institutions at the end of the year   units <sup>1</sup>
2018	92	2,667	3,016
2015	95	3.868	4.279
2010	112	5.000	5.556
2005	113	5.838	6.235

1 - Infant homes, state (county), municipal, non-governmental, temporary childcare homes, community childcare homes, care groups in preschool education institutions, care homes for children and youth with disability (pensions)

2 - Infants homes, state (county), municipality, non-governmental, temporary childcare home, childcare groups at pre-school establishments, care homes for disabled children and youth (pensions).

*Note.* Statistics Lithuania 2019

- *Children in out-of-home care such as foster care \**

Table 11. *Families (family care homes) and foster children in them*

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Number of foster children in foster families   persons	279	302	373	408	427	453	458	460	405

Note. Statistics Lithuania 2019

- *Home-based support*

Table 12. *Children who received social services at home*

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Disabled children until 7 years of age	35	28	47	103	82**	75
Disabled children of 7-17 years of age	118	141	181	126	143**	82
Children until 7 years of age	5,194	4,959	4,609	5,420	4,348	6,227
Children of 7-17 years of age	10,776	9,830	9,432	10,702	8,813	11,666

\*\*Revised data

Note. Statistics Lithuania 2019

Table 13. *Benefits children received in 2019*

Year	Number of pupils receiving free school meal	Expenditure on free school meal EUR thousand <sup>1</sup>	Average annual number of recipients of State social insurance maternity and paternity benefits, persons <sup>2,3</sup>	Expenditure on State social insurance maternity and paternity benefits   EUR thousand	Number of recipients of benefits for families bringing up children (Pregnancy grant (it has been paid from 1 July 2004))	Expenditure on benefits for families bringing up children   EUR thousand (Pregnancy grant (it has been paid from 1 July 2004))
2019	47,258	17,644.9	-	-	3,716	283.1
2018	48,402	11,078.7	24,486	72,771.6	4,212	318.8

1 - Data provided by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. In September-December of 2008, all schoolchildren in primary schools were provided by free of charge meals. 2 - Data provided by the State Social Insurance Fund Board under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania.

3 - The amount by counties and municipalities may not match because some beneficiaries and expenditure for their benefits are not assigned to a specific territory.

Note. Statistics Lithuania 2020

### 13.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare

- *Poverty rates*

Table 14. At-risk-of-poverty rate by poverty threshold, age and sex - EU-SILC and ECHP surveys

GEO/TI ME	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU*	16.0	16.1	16.6	16.6	16.4	16.5	16.9	16.8	16.7	17.2	17.3	17.3	16.9	17.1
LT	20.5	20.0	19.1	20.9	20.3	20.5	19.2	18.6	20.6	19.1	22.2	21.9	22.9	22.9

Note. Eurostat

Comment: EU\*- European Union (EU6-1958, EU9-1973, EU10-1981, EU12-1986, EU15-1995, EU25-2004, EU27-2007, EU28-2013, EU27-2020)

Table 15. *People at risk of poverty or social exclusion (Less than 18 years)*

GEO/ TIME	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU*	:	:	:	26.5	26.5	27.6	27.3	28.1	27.9	27.8	27.1	26.4	24.9	24.3
LT	42.5	37.2	29.9	29.1	30.8	35.8	34.6	31.9	35.4	28.9	32.7	32.4	31.6	28.0

Note. Eurostat

Comment: EU\*- European Union (EU6-1958, EU9-1973, EU10-1981, EU12-1986, EU15-1995, EU25-2004, EU27-2007, EU28-2013, EU27-2020)

Table 16. *Severe material deprivation rate*

GEO/TIME	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU	:	:	:	8.5	8.2	8.4	8.8	9.9	9.6	8.9	8.1	7.5	6.6	5.9
LT	32.6	25.3	16.6	12.5	15.6	19.9	19.0	19.8	16.0	13.6	13.9	13.5	12.4	11.1

Note. Eurostat  
Comment: EU\*- European Union (EU6-1958, EU9-1973, EU10-1981, EU12-1986, EU15-1995, EU25-2004, EU27-2007, EU28-2013, EU27-2020)

Table 17. *Severe material deprivation rate (less than 18 years)*

GEO/TIME	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU	:	:	:	9.8	9.5	9.9	10.1	11.8	11.1	10.4	9.6	8.5	7.1	6.6

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LT	32.2	24.0	15.9	11.8	15.8	20.0	16.7	16.9	18.5	13.7	13.8	11.5	13.0	10.0
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Note. Eurostat

Comment: EU\*- European Union (EU6-1958, EU9-1973, EU10-1981, EU12-1986, EU15-1995, EU25-2004, EU27-2007, EU28-2013, EU27-2020)

- *Employment/unemployment rates;*

Table 18. *Employment and activity (aged 15-64)*

GEO/TIME	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU(27)	61.7	62.2	63.2	64.3	64.8	63.6	63.3	63.4	63.2	63.1	63.8	64.6	65.6	66.8	67.7
LT	61.6	62.9	63.6	65.0	64.4	59.9	57.6	60.2	62.0	63.7	65.7	67.2	69.4	70.4	72.4

Note. Eurostat

Table 19. *Unemployment (Percentage of active population)*

GEO/TIME	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
EU(27)	9.9	9.7	8.7	7.5	7.3	9.2	9.9	9.9	10.9	11.4	10.9	10.1	9.1	8.2	7.3	6.7
LT	10.9	8.3	5.8	4.3	5.8	13.8	17.8	15.4	13.4	11.8	10.7	9.1	7.9	7.1	6.2	6.3

Note. Eurostat

- *Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage related to gender, age, ethnicity, migrant status and other social dimensions*

No information available

- *Patterns of education disadvantage*

Table 20. *Early leavers from education and training (from 18-24)*

GEO/TIME	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
EU (27)	13.8	13.2	12.6	11.8	11.1	11.0	10.7	10.6	10.5	10.2
Lithuania	7.9	7.4	6.5	6.3	5.9	5.5	4.8	5.4	4.6	4.4

Note. Eurostat

- *Major social welfare trends such as disadvantage risks, welfare benefit receipt levels*

Table 21. *Number of recipients who receive cash benefits for families raising children*

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
One-time cash benefit for pregnant women (paid since July 1, 2004)	6 444	5 656	4 894	4 212	3 716
Cash benefit for the care of children in school, college or university (paid since January 1, 2017)	–	–	396	471	428
One-time cash benefit after the birth of a child	32 946	33 586	30 957	29 572	27 753
Cash benefit for the birth of more than one child at the same time and their care (paid since January 1, 2017)	–	–	1 381	1 636	1 707
Cash benefit for the adoption of a child (paid since January 1, 2018)	–	–	–	112	170

Cash benefit for a child (paid since July 1, 2004)	76 246	66 107	119 715	491 972	516 525
Cash benefit for child's guardianship	10 513	10 251	10 023	9 419	8 656
Cash benefit for compulsory service soldier's child	11	43	37	39	4
One-time cash benefit for settling down	2 867	2 545	2 434	3 375	3 296
Targeted supplement for a child's guardianship	454	4 795	5 638	5 805	5 602

Note. Statistics Lithuania 2020

Table 22. Mean annual number of recipients of mother and father benefits of state social insurance

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
State social insurance cash benefits for maternity (pregnancy and childbirth)	20 044	21 604	23 325	23 650	24 486
State social insurance maternity/paternity cash benefit until a child reaches one year of age	17 907	19 020	20 298	20 319	19 754
State social insurance paternity cash benefit (until a child reaches one month of age)	13 476	14 933	16 277	16 002	16 355
State social insurance maternity/paternity cash benefit for the child's first two years	18 329	18 934	21 168	23 552	23 820

Note. Statistics Lithuania 2019

Table 23. *Number of school students who receive free meals*

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
No	5 839	63 550	52 564	48 402	47 258

Note. Statistics Lithuania 2020

Table 24. *Number of families fostering children at the end of the year*

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
No	4 483	4 385	4 327	4 371	4 085

Note. Statistics Lithuania 2019

Table 25. *Number of children in foster families at the end of the year*

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
No	5 681	5 493	5 477	5 602	5 249

Note. Statistics Lithuania 2019

Table 26. *Number of children who lost parental custody*

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
No	1 871	1 837	2 184	2 402	2 033

Note. Statistics Lithuania 2019

- *Housing problems*

Table 27. *Overcrowding rate*

GEO/TIME	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU*	:	:	:	18.3	17.7	17.7	17.0	16.9	17.0	16.7	16.7	16.6	15.7	15.5
LT	52.8	53.5	52.5	48.4	48.1	45.5	19.5	19.0	28.0	28.3	26.4	23.7	23.7	22.8

Note. Eurostat

Comment: EU\*- European Union (EU6-1958, EU9-1973, EU10-1981, EU12-1986, EU15-1995, EU25-2004, EU27-2007, EU28-2013, EU27-2020)

Table 28. *Housing cost overburden rate*

GEO/TIME	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU	:	:	10.7	10.5	10.2	10.7	11.1	10.4	10.6	10.9	10.8	10.0	9.5	9.6
LT	9.3	5.8	4.5	5.4	5.3	13.3	10.6	7.3	8.8	7.1	10.1	6.9	7.3	6.7

Note. Eurostat

Comment: EU\*- European Union (EU6-1958, EU9-1973, EU10-1981, EU12-1986, EU15-1995, EU25-2004, EU27-2007, EU28-2013, EU27-2020)

Table 29. *Housing cost overburden rate (less than 18)*

GEO/TIME	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU*	:	:	10.7	10.5	10.2	10.7	11.1	10.4	10.6	10.9	10.8	10.0	9.5	9.6
LT	9.3	5.8	4.5	5.4	5.3	13.3	10.6	7.3	8.8	7.1	10.1	6.9	7.3	6.7

Note. Eurostat

Comment: EU\*- European Union (EU6-1958, EU9-1973, EU10-1981, EU12-1986, EU15-1995, EU25-2004, EU27-2007, EU28-2013, EU27-2020).

*Summary: The broader socio-economic context and trends which influences children's, parental and family circumstances and environments:*

According to the Lithuanian researchers (Maslauskaitė, 2019; Aidukaitė & Senkuvienė, 2019), during the last three decades, the Lithuanian family experienced significant shifts. Marriage rates have decreased (the crude marriage rate was around 7.5 in 2017), non-marital fertility has increased, divorce rates remained high and fertility has declined. In 2016, the crude divorce rates (i.e. the number of divorces per 1000 inhabitants) in Lithuania was 3.1, i. e. among the highest in the OECD countries. The total divorce rate shows that approximately 40 per cent of all marriages are dissolved in the country. As the data demonstrate, around one in four families with children are single-parent families (26.9 per cent) and the absolute majority of them are single-mother families. It means that a quarter (25 per cent) of all 0-17-year-old children grow up in a single-parent family. In Lithuania, the level of poverty of single-parent families is very high: In 2017, 48.4 per cent of single-parent families lived at risk of poverty. Moreover, Lithuania represents a special case of aggressive neoliberal capitalism, a marginal welfare state and a radical austerity strategy implemented during the financial crisis of 2008-2009. All this resulted in a very high level of income inequality (the second highest in the EU), the lowest social expenditures in the EU and marginal social spending on family policy.

### **13.4 The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions, and actors' which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision**

- *Membership to the EU;*

YES in 2004

- *Relationship with European Union*

Membership in the EU and accession into NATO became the two cornerstones of Lithuania's foreign policy since the early 1990s and enjoyed broad political support. Lithuania became a full-fledged member of the European Union on May 1, 2004. Lithuania's presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2013 was one of the country's most important contributions to the EU policymaking and implementation. There are 11 members of the European Parliament from Lithuania. The euro was introduced as a national currency in 2015 in Lithuania.

- *Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy*

The Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania and the Lithuanian government (the most notably the Ministry of Social Security and Labour) are the main policy actors in family policy, family support and social policy. However, as many researchers argue (Bučaitė-Vilkė et al., 2012; Stankūnienė et al., 2013; Žalimienė, 2015; Aidukaitė & Senkuvienė, 2019), family policy is not a priority sphere of politics: the change of political powers and lack of financial resources to family policy measures have negative impact on the consistency and efficiency of family policy formation. Lithuania still lacks the consensus concerning the object of family policy and operational trends; therefore, the attitudes here change alongside the change of the Government. Low involvement of NGOs, the domination of Catholic organisations (resulting in inadequate representation of interests) in forming family policy prevents from the establishment of a family-friendly environment in the country.

- *Influential lobbying groups*

There is a strong conservative trend in campaigning for “traditional” family values in Lithuania by such NGOs as “Free Society Institute”, “Institute of Christian Culture” and “Forum of Lithuanian Parents”. These NGOs supported by the Catholic Church and foreign sources (often illicit) advocate for the traditional (Catholic) family values. They emphasize that national values/traditions, even if they are based on intolerance of vulnerable groups or the tradition of violence (e.g., widespread corporal punishment of children), should be a priority over obligations to follow international treaties. These retrogressive tendencies in family support have been intensifying during the last decade. Pressed by the Catholic Church and a number of ultraconservative NGOs, the Lithuanian Parliament refused to ratify the Istanbul Convention. The unfavourable conservative context threatens the rights of children and adolescents to health and development, and paves the way to discrimination of children and families belonging to various vulnerable groups.

- *Influential policy/research networks*

There are no influential policy/research networks working in the field of family policy and support. Only separate institutions and individual researchers could be mentioned as the ones that focus on family research, family policy and children’s rights. Most notably, such institutions as Vytautas Magnus University, Vilnius University, and the Lithuanian Centre for Social Research have a cluster of researchers working in the field. As for influential policy networks, “Human Rights Monitoring Institute” (Human Rights Monitoring Institute, 2012) should be mentioned as an NGO that monitors support for vulnerable families and children’s rights, among other issues. This organization has repeatedly attempted to create a coalition of progressive NGOs working on different human rights issues.

- *The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support*

Since every four years following election to Parliament the parties in power often change completely, family policy/family support depends on the ruling parties' political will and decisions. Lithuanian politicians favour short-term family policy measures that do not necessarily improve the family situation. Moreover, the situation is complicated by a number of factors related to the political actors' decisions: a frequent change of political powers; inadequate situation analysis and the use of its results in the decision-making process; lack of coordination of family policy issues; insufficient cooperation between different authorities, politicians and scientists; comparatively weak non-governmental organisations and inadequate representation of interests; lack of financial resources; and insufficient attention to the monitoring and evaluation of implemented family policy measures.

- *The democratic system and main political parties; unitary vs federal state structures; centralised vs decentralised structures)*

During the period of 2016-2020, the main political parties with the biggest representation in the Parliament were the following: Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union, Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats, Social Democratic Labour Party of Lithuania, Liberal Movement, Social Democratic Party of Lithuania and Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania. Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union has the most seats in the Parliament (49 out of 141).

A new coalition agreement was signed by five centre right-wing parties (the Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union and the Social Democratic Labour Party of Lithuania, the Order and Justice party and the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania-Christian Families Alliance) in Lithuania on 5 July, 2019. The agenda of this coalition has a strong social component with a family support programme modelled on the Polish government's programme. Politicians planned to increase spending on social insurance to a level of the European average within a timeframe of five years. Support for families includes an offer of free school dinners (including at preschools), a raise in child benefits to 70 euros a month (and additionally 30 euros for families with many children and with low income), pregnancy benefits, and no tuition fees for bachelor's studies. However, only some planned measures including the raise in child cash benefit and free meals at schools have been implemented so far.

Lithuania is a highly centralized state. Family policies and support depend on the decisions of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania and the Lithuanian government. Regional authorities have almost no say in family-support decisions. Local municipalities only participate in providing childcare services in public and private institutions (kindergartens and primary

schools-kindergartens). Some strategic decisions regarding these services are taken by local municipality councils but they are implemented by the Department of Education.

- *The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular (e.g., Ministry roles, national vs local/regional government roles)*

The Ministry of Social Security and Labour; Ministry of Education, Science and Sports; Ministry of Health; the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Agency under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, and the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children's Rights are the main institutions focusing on social assistance and support for families and children. The state support system for families and children comprises two main parts: benefits paid irrespective of the family assets and income and the assistance paid to poor families according to their income level. Efforts to improve the social assistance system for families and children embody the following important areas: development of socioeconomic environment by reducing unemployment; promotion of occupational activity; improvement of the family and children support system; increase in the family responsibilities for the family well-being; creation of conditions favourable to families in solving housing problems; co-ordination of family allowances with other forms of assistance, and other measures promoting more active integration into the labour market through education. All support systems are highly centralized and dependent on the mentioned Ministries.

- *The ways in and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policymaking and reviews*

Lithuania is characterized by low level of civic involvement in policymaking and reviews. Only certain NGOs are involved in family policies and family support; however, the government agencies, most notably the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, often distrust the civic involvement. Little attention is paid to the scientific analysis of families and researchers' recommendations. Moreover, the Catholic Church and Catholic organizations dominate the field of family policy formation. The low level of participation of professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities in family policy demonstrates that the interests of families and communities are not adequately represented in family policy formation. Such situations negatively influence the assessment of family needs leading to inefficient legislation and inadequate family support measures.

### **13.5 List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year 2000. For each policy document indicate**

- Law on Protection against Domestic Violence of the Republic of Lithuania

- Civil Code of the Republic of Lithuania
- Law on Benefits for Children of the Republic of Lithuania
- Law on Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania
- Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania
- Law on Minimum and Medium Child Care of the Republic of Lithuania
- Law on Fundamentals of Protection of the Rights of the Child of the Republic of Lithuania
- Law on Child Maintenance Benefits of the Republic of Lithuania
- Law on State-Guaranteed Legal Aid of the Republic of Lithuania
- Law on Sickness and Maternity Social Insurance of the Republic of Lithuania
- Law on Family Strengthening of the Republic of Lithuania
- *Whether participation of families and young people has been mentioned in the document*

Most documents do not mention the direct participation of families and young people in their implementation with the exception of the “Law on Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania” and “Law on the Family Strengthening of the Republic of Lithuania”. “Law on Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania” states that its objective is to “provide an individual (family) with conditions to develop and strengthen their capabilities to solve their social problems, to maintain social relationships with society, as well as to help them overcome social exclusion.” The recent “Law on the Family Strengthening of the Republic of Lithuania” mentions that its social support and services for families “will guarantee families a help necessary to develop their capabilities to independently solve arising problems and will help strengthen possibilities for them to create a safe, healthy and sustainable environment in families.” However, all competences for family support and family policies are assigned to the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and other ministries, a newly established National Council of Family, the Commission of Family Policy (also new) and Family Councils at the municipality levels if they are to be established.

- *The extent to which such participation has been implemented \**

There is no information or research about the extent of the participation of families and young people in implementation of these documents. As previously mentioned, civic participation is low in Lithuania which is reflected in a low involvement of families in family policy formation.

### 13.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services

- *The priorities in child welfare and family policy \**

The priorities in child welfare and family policy are related to the following main areas: child wellbeing (to reduce social exclusion), child cash benefits, maternity benefits, and the reduction of violence against children. In 2003, the Lithuanian Parliament approved the Conceptual Framework of the State Policy on Child Welfare that presented the main child welfare policy principles and values. Child Wellbeing Programme for 2013-2018 was passed in 2012 that aimed to develop the availability of services for children and families in reducing poverty and social exclusion. Its main objective was to reduce the growing number of children living in social risk families and deprived of parental care. Increase in the child cash benefit took place in December 2019. The Lithuanian government has implemented amendments to the law on maternity social insurance that would make it easier for women who lose their jobs during pregnancy to receive maternity benefit. In February 2019, amendments were made to the law on the Fundamental Rights of Child Protection which banned all uses of corporal punishment against children. The law aims to reduce violence against children in all its manifestations, focusing on child abuse prevention and intervention, including all types of violence (physical, emotional and sexual).

- *The main types of family provision and support and key features (e.g., different types of cash support (universal and targeted, work-family reconciliation measures and children's/family services, childcare etc) \**

Lithuania has a mixed type of cash support for families: universal and targeted. The state support system for families and children is comprised of cash benefits paid irrespective of the family assets and income, and assistance paid to poor families according to their income level. According to Aidukaitė and Senkuvienė (2019), one of the important universal benefits in Lithuania is the child's birth grant, which is payable as a lump sum after the child is born. Another universal benefit is a child allowance called the "child money". It is paid monthly per every child from birth to 18 years of age (or to 21 years if a person studies according to the general education curriculum). Since 2018, it has become the universal benefit paid to every child residing in Lithuania. Besides the financial support, there is also a network of public preschool facilities. However, the development of these institutions in Lithuania remains uneven: while the number of preschool institutions has been growing in urban areas, it has declined in rural areas. Lithuania has a generous parental leave system. According to new amendments implemented in January of 2019, a parent can choose to receive a benefit until the child is one year old (they

will be paid 77.58 percent of the compensated recipient's wages) or a parent can choose to receive a benefit until the child is two years old—from the end of the pregnancy and childbirth or the paternity leave until the child is one year old, he will be paid 54.31 percent, and later, until the child is two years old—31.03 percent. This leave can be used optionally by the mother or the father. However, Lithuania lacks well-developed family policies addressing work-family reconciliation, i. e., flexible forms of employment, after-class activities for children at school, etc. are underdeveloped.

- *The types of funding involved such as state, charity vs private sector providers and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners \**

All mentioned cash benefits for families and children are exclusively state-based and supported. The system of charitable organizations is underdeveloped, and deals mostly with individuals and families at risk of poverty and social exclusion. The private sector does not have a significant involvement in funding families with the exception of yearly charitable initiatives.

- *Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations. \**

Policy monitoring and evaluation are largely done by researchers and NGOs. However, due to the lack of researchers and the weakness of the NGO sector in the field, insufficient attention is paid to the monitoring and evaluation of implemented family policy measures. The lack of monitoring and evaluation is one of many factors that prevent the efficient formation of family policy. Additionally, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour is responsible for the implementation and monitoring of family policy and evaluation. It should conduct regular quantitative and qualitative studies to monitor the effectiveness of its family policies, and use the results to modify existing social policy measures and include new ones. However, this has not been achieved.

- *Limitations in national and official data and statistics \**

The Lithuanian Department of Statistics presents exhaustive data on some social indicators that reflect child and family wellbeing and living standards of families with children. Income and poverty, families at risk of poverty, family support and social protection, children in public care, violence against children, family formation and stability, and fertility are also covered. The biggest limitation in national data is related to the composition and size of households and families that are drawn from the 2011 Population and Housing Census of the Republic of Lithuania and are outdated. Another limitation is that certain statistical data are not openly available to the public at the website of the Lithuanian Department of Statistics and could only be purchased.

### **13.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision. What are the prominent policy and practice developments related to family support services from children’s rights, social equality and evidence-informed perspectives?**

- *What are the pressing policy, practice and research challenges impeding developments?*

One of the biggest challenges of family policy in Lithuania remains combating child poverty and helping parents to facilitate work-life balance. The major problems are related to the lack of childcare facilities, especially in rural areas, and of possibilities for flexible work arrangements. The Lithuanian family support system lacks a systematic approach and clear strategic direction. The network of services for families is insufficiently developed. Another important policy issue repeatedly mentioned in the research conducted on the Lithuanian family is the lack of gender equality dimension in the family support system. The Law on Strengthening the Family adopted by the Lithuanian Parliament in 2017 could be viewed as an encroachment on gender equality and diversity of families. The law aims to create the legal and organizational preconditions for strengthening the institute of family, and to establish the institutions responsible for the implementation of the family policies. The National Council of Families was established as a state budgetary institution under the Parliament in December 2019, to coordinate those efforts at the national level. The policies are to be implemented by the family councils which will be established at the municipal councils with the task to plan and oversee the implementation of supporting measures for family households in local communities. This law disadvantages single-parent families and the partnerships of people of the same sex and focuses on the so-called “traditional family”. It could be argued that instead of focusing on family support measures, this law pays more attention to the very concept of the family and its definition (what should and should not be considered a “real” family worthy of social and economic support).

- *What are the pressing gaps in provision?*

Policy initiatives favouring various forms of flexible employment (flexible hours, availability of short-term childcare leave due to illness or other reasons, telework, various part-time job schemes, short-term absences due to school events, academic holidays, or other personal childcare-related reasons, etc.) are still crucial gaps in providing family support. It is also important to educate and inform employers about the benefits that flexible employment could bring to their businesses, as well as families with minors. There is a need to expand support for families, so it allows for an improved work-life balance: greater availability of full-time care in kindergartens and schools (that requires developing a network of institutions offering extended day-care and after-school activities for kids); the expansion of public services for elderly and disabled people; and the provision of opportunities to organize recreational activities during school and summer holidays. However, the lack of coordination of family policy issues;

insufficient cooperation between different authorities, politicians, and scientists; comparatively weak non-governmental organisations; the lack of financial resources, and insufficient attention to monitoring and evaluation of implemented family policy measures prevent the development of adequate family and child support measures and the improvement of the family situation in Lithuania.

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## 14 MALTA - National report on family support policy & provision

**Angela Abela<sup>23</sup>**

The data provided in the answers below is to be based on official data, policy documents, relevant literature, and websites.

### 14.1 Trends and issues related to demography

#### 1. Fertility rates

The fertility rate in Malta was stable from 2010 to 2016, however it started to decline in 2017. In 2018, it reached 1.23 which is the lowest in the EU where the average fertility rate is 1.56 (Table 1).

Table 1. *Fertility rates*

Year	Fertility rate
2010	1.36
2015	1.37
2016	1.37
2017	1.26
2018	1.23
2019	N/A

<sup>23</sup> I would like to thank all those who helped me build this national case study on family support with an emphasis on children and parents or that of individuals designated to this role. These include Charlene Abela, Ronald Balzan, Andy Ellul, Denise Fiorentino, Darlene May Gauci, Alfred Gixti, Christine Marchand Agius and Rachael Scicluna. They all provided me with all the needed relevant information. I am particularly indebted to Charlene Abela who was my research assistant for this project.

## 2. Families with children by number of children

From 2010 to 2019, there was a large increase in the share of households with one child. In fact, 65% of all households with children had only one child as opposed to 2010 when only 41% of households with children had only one child. This is in line with the fertility indicator which shows a constant decline over the years. Meanwhile, the number of households with two or more children kept decreasing over the years, whereas in 2010, 59% of households had two or more children in 2019 the share dropped by 25 percentage points to 35% (Table 2).

Table 2. Households by number of children

Year	No. of children			
	1	2	3	4+
	%			
2010	41	48.5	8.7	1.8
2015	58.6	34.3	5.2	1.9
2016	61.4	31.6	5.4	1.5
2017	64.3	29.1	5.1	1.5
2018	65.3	29.3	4.2	1.2
2019	64.8	30.6	4	0.6

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

## 3. Percentage of the population from 0 to 19

In 2010, the share of persons aged 0-19 was slightly higher in Malta when compared with the EU28 average. However, from 2015 the share for Malta was consistently lower than that of the

EU. While the EU rate remained stable from 2015 to 2019, the rate for Malta continued to decline, hence the difference between the EU and MT rates kept on increasing (Table 3).

Table 3. *Population 19 years and under*

Year	%
2010	21.9
2015	19.9
2016	19.5
2017	19.2
2018	18.7
2019	18.2

#### 4. *Percentage of population over working (retiring) age*

Figures from 2010 to 2019 show an increase in the share of persons over working age hence indicating a more ageing population. However, the share was quite consistent from 2017 to 2019 (Table 4). This is different than that of the EU average where results kept increasing year by year.

People are retiring at an older age and there is an increasing number of people who remain in gainful employment for longer, with the duration of working life being on average 32.9 years in 2000, to it increasing to 35.6 years in the year 2016 (Eurofound, 2018).

Table 4. *Population over working age*

Year	%
2010	14.9
2015	18.2
2016	18.5
2017	18.8
2018	18.8
2019	18.7

### 5. *Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities*

According to Azzopardi (2015), certain groups in a population are more at risk. These include children, elderly, disabled persons, ex-convicts, lone parents, unemployed, and other low-income groups. The National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion 2014-2024 (2015) refers to the following vulnerable groups in the Maltese society:

- Children and young people coming from low-income families who experience several disadvantages related to their health, education, income, employment, socialisation, and behavioural or emotional development.
- Unemployed persons: A direct correlation exists between unemployment and income poverty.
- Working poor: Persons who are in poverty or socially excluded despite being in employment. This arises from labour market disadvantages and precarious employment (Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity, 2014).
- Asylum seekers and immigrants are also a vulnerable group in Maltese society. The state covers their basic everyday needs. Stigma and mistrust from society still prevails. For this reason, they often face problems such as indecent living conditions and precarious jobs (Azzopardi, 2015).

- Children and young people with physical or mental disabilities: In 2013, according to the last national Census figures published in 2011, around 5% of children (from 0 to 18 years) had a disability (Callus & Farrugia, 2013). Latest population figures indicated that the population of children in 2019 stood at 84,916 (Eurostat, 2020) of which 1.6% registered their disability with the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD). However, this figure does not include all children with disability in Malta since families may choose not to register their children as having a disability with CRPD, and some disabilities are not diagnosed at birth and thus these children are not registered until a diagnosis is made. Until the end of January 2021, 10.5% of students between five and 16 years of age in State schools had LSE support. This support aims to facilitate a more inclusive educational environment for all children with mental or physical disabilities. Regrettably the data for non-state schools is not available (Director of the National School Support Services, personal communication, 2021). Hopefully a new Census will take place soon.
- Other vulnerable social groups include persons experiencing violence and other forms of abuse, persons with addictive behaviour, persons who lack life skills; and persons experiencing discrimination due to sexual orientation, religious ideals or ethnic origin (Azzopardi, 2015; Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity, 2015).

## 6. *Migration patterns*

Figures show that the influx of migrants in Malta has kept increasing consistently over the years except for 2016, where the difference from the previous year was of 115 persons. Also, the number of third country nationals with low HDI increased drastically in 2018 (Table 5).

According to Holicza and Chircop (2018), a stable economy has increased the required labour force hence foreigners are more inclined to seek job opportunities in Malta. Similarly, a review published by the Central Bank of Malta (2019) suggested that the shortage in labour force among Maltese workers is being addressed by the employment of foreign nationals.

The figure provided in this table does not reflect the total population of migrants residing in Malta. Persons who have been residing or are expected to reside in the country for at least 12 months are included in the population. Moreover, this figure does not include persons residing in private institutions, for instance migrants who live in open centres.

Table 5. *Number of immigrants*

Year	No. of immigrants	
	Third country nationals	Total
2013	223	10,897
2014	244	14,454
2015	393	16,936
2016	360	17,051
2017	629	21,676
2018	2,141	26,444

The number of persons migrating remained quite stable across the years with 2018 registering the largest number of persons who emigrated from Malta (Table 6). In 2010, 32% of all persons who emigrated were Maltese citizens. However, from 2015 to 2018, the percentage of Maltese who emigrated dropped to an average of 13%. During these years, the majority of persons who emigrated were foreigners (on average from 2015 to 2018 39% were EU and 48% were non-EU).

Table 6. *Number of emigrants*

Year	No.
2013	4,778
2014	5,108
2015	7,095

2016	8,303
2017	7,020
2018	9,342

Note. Eurostat Database (2020)

## 14.2 Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles and children's living arrangements

### (i) Family household types

Table 7. Type of households as a percentage of total households

Household type	Year			
	2015	2016	2017	2018
	%			
Total households	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Households without children	65.7	66.0	66.0	66.0
<i>of which:</i>				
One-person household, under 65 years	12.7	12.8	13.2	12.5
One-person household, 65+ years	12.5	13.0	13.1	14.4
Two adults, no children, under 65 years	13.5	13.6	13.3	14.5

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Two adults, no children, at least 1 adult aged 65+	14.0	14.3	14.9	14.1
Other households without children	13.0	12.2	11.5	10.6
Households with children	34.3	34.0	34.0	34.0
<i>of which:</i>				
One adult with one or more children	3.9	3.9	4.1	3.8
Two adults, one child	10.1	10.6	11.3	11.5
Two adults, two children	10.2	9.4	9.0	8.8
Two adults, three or more children	2.2	2.3	2.1	1.8
Other households with one or more children	8.0	7.9	7.5	8.2

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Note. National Statistics Office (2020b).

*(ii) Marriage and divorce rates*

From 2010 to 2018, the crude marriage rate in Malta was on average six of every 1,000 persons (Table 8). This is higher than the EU 28 average of four per 1,000 persons. Although Malta has one of the highest crude marriage rates in the EU, this must be treated with some caution as marriages between two foreigners are also included in this figure. Wedding tourism has grown over the past decade and reached 30% of all marriages in 2018 (Abela, Vella, et al., 2020).

Table 8. *Crude marriage rate*

Year	%
2010	6.3
2015	6.7
2016	6.7
2017	6.3
2018	5.8

The divorce law came into effect on October 1, 2011, in Malta. The subsequent year (2012, the first year after its introduction) registered the highest record of divorces; 1.1 per 1,000 persons. At an annual average of 0.7 divorces per 1,000 inhabitants, Malta still has the lowest crude divorce rate in Europe in 2018 (Table 9).

Table 9. *Crude divorce rate*

Year	%
2011	0.1
2012	1.1
2013	0.8
2014	0.7
2015	0.8
2016	0.8
2017	0.7

2018      0.7

### *Divorces per 100 marriages*

The highest number of divorces per 100 marriages was recorded in 2012 while a more stable rate was recorded from 2013 to 2016. In 2017 a decline in the number of divorces was recorded (Table 10).

The divorce rate for MT is well below the EU-28 average where from 2011 to 2015 where there were on average 45 divorces out of every 100 marriages.

Table 10. *Number of divorces per 100 marriages*

Year	No.
2011	1.6
2012	15.6
2013	13.1
2014	11.3
2015	12.4
2016	12.2
2017	10.6

### *(iii) Lone-parent families*

The number of lone-parent families in Malta is on the increase. Figures show that from 2010 to 2015 there was a growth of 1.3 percentage points. This figure excludes lone parents living with their own parents (Table 11).

Table 11. *Percentage of lone parent families*

Year	%
2010	2.6
2015	3.9
2016 <sup>a</sup>	3.9
2017 <sup>b</sup>	4.1
2018 <sup>c</sup>	3.8

Note <sup>a-c</sup>: National Statistics Office (2020).

*(iv) New family forms such as same-sex couple households*

In Malta, civil unions between same-sex and opposite sex couples were introduced in 2014. The Civil Unions Act grants the same rights and obligations as marriage. Between 2014 and early 2018, 183 civil unions took place. According to Parliamentary Question 3582 of January 2018, 173 of these occurred between same-sex couples, while 10 occurred between different sex couples. A year-by-year breakdown by sex of partner could not be provided, in order to protect the identity of the persons due to GDPR restrictions (Public Registry, personal communication, 2020 cited by Abela, Vella, et al., 2020).

Civil marriage among gay couples was introduced in Malta in 2017. According to Abela, Pisc et al. (2020) the number of same-sex couples since 1st September 2017 amounted to 175.

A Cohabitation Act has been in force in Malta since 2017, which provided legal recognition of the rights and duties of couples who cohabit. The Act recognised three types of cohabitation: de facto, formalised through a contract, and by unilateral declaration. In March 2020, a new cohabitation law was tabled in Parliament, providing for the recognition of only those cohabitations based on a contract. Cohabiting couples must formalise their situation through a contract before a notary, which is then entered in the Public Registry and a certificate of cohabitation is issued. Due to the small number of couples registered, statistics on cohabiting couples were not provided by Identity Malta in order to ensure privacy (Abela, Vella, et al., 2020).

*(v) Family structures and changes across social groups*

See Section 2.1.

*(vi) Children and Youth living in Institutions*

Figures from administrative data show that the number of children living in institutions was constant between 2015 and 2018. However, in 2019 there was an increase in the number of children living in institutions (Table 12).

Table 12. *Number of children and youth living in institutions*

Year	No.
2015	--
2016	--
2017	196
2018	248
2019	220

<sup>24</sup>

*(vii) Children in out-of-home care such as foster care*

Figures from administrative data show that the number of children in foster care was constant between 2015 and 2019 (Table 13).

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<sup>24</sup> Note. Data provided by email sent by Ronald Balzan, Senior research executive dated 27/11/2020

Table 13. *Number of children in out-of-home care such as foster care*

Year	No.
2015	216
2016	243
2017	230
2018	244
2019	251

Note. Marchand-Agius (2020b).

Data on children and youth living in institutional care, residential care or family-based care is not comparable across Europe because as the Feasibility Study Child Guarantee country experts state “the numbers sometimes differ quite significantly, (between statistics provided at a national level and then internationally) and this makes the comparison between Member States difficult. This highlights the urgent need to push for better collection and analysis of data across the EU” (Frazer et al., 2020, p. 20). In fact, the numbers reported by the experts for MT are much lower than the ones published nationally.

*(viii) Home-based support*

Home-Based Therapeutic Services (HBTS) is an outreach service offering therapeutic support and parenting to multi-stressed families within their communities. HBTS was introduced in the Northern region of Malta in 2015 as a pilot project. Following an evaluation exercise, the service was expanded across the nation in October 2016. Figures from administrative data show that home-based support services dropped in 2018, as can be seen in Table 14 below.

Table 14. *Number of families benefitting from the home-based therapeutic services (HBTS)*

Year	No.
2017	240
2018	177
2019	232

Note. Marchand-Agius (2018b, 2019b, 2020a).

### 14.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare

#### (i) Poverty rates

The at-risk-of-poverty rate (ARP) indicates an increasing trend for Malta. In fact, from 14.3 per cent in 2005, by 2010 the rate reached 15.5%. It continued to increase slowly to 17.1% in 2019 (See Table 15 hereunder).

On the other hand, the ARP for children under 18 years of age was on the increase from 2005 (23.3%) to 2010, reaching 26.7%, and to 33% in 2013, and then from 2014 it started declining, reaching 22.8% in 2018. This is slightly lower than the EU-28 average of 24.3% in 2018.

Table 15. *At-risk-of-poverty rate (ARP)*

Year	ARP %	
	Children less than 18 years	Total
2010	26.7	15.5
2015	28.4	16.6

2016	24.0	16.5
2017	23.0	16.7
2018	22.8	16.8
2019 <sup>a</sup>	N/A	17.1

Note <sup>a</sup>. National Statistics Office (2020a)

Results show that the at-risk-of-poverty rate for lone parents is much higher than that of the total population. The highest rate was recorded in 2018 (48.6%) and it went down by 5.7 percentage points in 2019 (42.9%) (Table 16). This was due to a number of welfare-to-work incentives, including the tapering of benefits, in work benefits, and free childcare scheme among others (Abela et al., Submitted for publication). Nevertheless, Malta places sixth from last with regard to the ARP among lone parents together with Croatia, Greece, Ireland, UK, and Lithuania (Eurostat, 2020).

A higher ARP rate for MT was recorded for households with two and more children when compared with other EU countries. However, Malta has one of the lowest ARP rates for two adults with one dependent child among European countries.

Table 16. *At-risk-of-poverty rate by household type*

Year	Household Type			
	One adult with children	Two adults with one child	Two adults with two children	Two adults with 3+ children
	%			
2015	45.3	12.7	15.6	39.9
2016	41.1	10.7	16.8	35.7

2017	42.9	11.1	14.5	35.5
2018	48.6	11.7	16.1	27.3
2019	42.9	9.4	17.6	33.1

Note. National Statistics Office (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020a)

(ii) *Employment/unemployment rates*

The unemployment rate for Malta was the highest in 2010 (6.8%). Since then, a steady decline has been recorded reaching 3.4% in 2019 (Table 17). This indicator was significantly lower than the EU-28 average of 6.4%. The reason for this is because the economic activity increased. This was brought about by increased investment in productive sectors; such as manufacture, pharmaceutical companies, financial services, the gaming industry, and finally in increase in tourism and an increase in the construction industry.

Table 17. *Unemployment rate*

Year	%
2010	6.8
2015	5.4
2016	4.7
2017	4.0
2018	3.7
2019	3.4

The employment rate for Malta has been on the increase for over a decade reaching 73.4% in 2019 (Table 18). This was mostly attributed to an increase in female employment.

Figures show that from 2010 to 2019 there was an increase of 24 percentage points of women in employment, much higher to the increase of their male counterparts (9.8 percentage points). The Government introduced several policies to attract women in employment such as:

- Free childcare support services for working parents (Inclusion, Equality and Social Welfare Department, 2020)
- Breakfast clubs for children
- Klabb 3 to 16: After-school hours service
- The adoption of family friendly measures, such as flexible hours, compressed hours, flexible start and finish times, and working from home in the public sector (Employment Policy, 2014).

As well as other initiatives that made work pay including:

- Tax credits for women returning to work (Inclusion, Equality and Social Welfare Department, 2020)
- The tapering of social benefits scheme (Inclusion, Equality and Social Welfare Department, 2020)
- The in-work benefit scheme (Inclusion, Equality and Social Welfare Department, 2020).
- The access to employment (A2E) scheme provides job opportunities and other work experiences for persons with low chances of employment.

Table 18. *Employment rate by sex*

Year	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
	%		
2010	72.5	39.5	56.2
2015	77.0	52.5	65.1

2016	78.9	55.0	67.2
2017	80.1	57.6	69.2
2018	81.5	61.5	71.9
2019	82.3	63.6	73.4

Note. Eurostat Database (2020)

*(iii) Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage related to gender, age, ethnicity, migrant status, and other social dimensions*

Even though female employment has increased dramatically over the years, according to the Gender Pay Gap (GPG) indicator the disparity between genders has continued to increase from 7.2% in 2010 to 11.7% in 2018, placing Malta below the EU average of 15.7% (Table 19). This is because women in Malta are under-represented in leadership positions (Baldacchino et al., 2016).

Table 19. *Gender pay gap*

Year	%
2010	7.2
2015	10.4
2016	11.0
2017	12.2
2018	11.7

Note. Eurostat Database (2020)

The share of persons between 18 and 24 years who were not employed or attending formal or non-formal education was decreasing until 2018 (7.3%) and increased again slightly in 2019 (8.0%) (Table 20).

Table 20. *Not in employment, education or training for persons between 15 and 24 years (NEETs)*

Year	%
2010	9.5
2015	10.5
2016	8.8
2017	8.6 <sup>(b)</sup>
2018	7.3
2019	8.0

Note i. (b) break-in-series.

Note ii. Eurostat Database (2020).

#### *(iv) Patterns of education disadvantage*

The Early School Leaving rate (ESL) is one of the European 2020 targets. Figures outline a decline in the share of persons between 18 and 24 years who are early school leavers from 2010 to 2019. However, in 2019, the figure was still significantly higher than the target set at 10%.

Policies have been implemented by government to address the needs of students who are at risk of becoming early school leavers. Such policies include:

- The introduction of foundation courses offered by MCAST and ITS as part of the Youth Guarantee scheme.
- The provision of alternative learning programmes for students with learning difficulties.

- Training for educators on new teaching and learning methods.
- Introduction of vocational education in the mainstream curriculum (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014).

Despite these policies, Malta still has one of the highest ESL rates among all European countries. In fact, Malta has the third highest early school leavers rate (16.7%) in the EU, with Iceland and Spain registering a higher rate of 17.9% and 16.7% respectively (Table 21). This rate exceeded by far the EU-28 average of 10.3 per cent. At the other end of the spectrum, European countries such as Lithuania, Greece and Slovenia have an ESL rate lower than 5% (4%, 4.1% and 4.4% respectively).

Table 21. *Early school leaving rate for persons between 18 and 24 years (ESL)*

Year	No.
2010	23.8
2015	20.2
2016	19.2
2017	17.7 <sup>(b)</sup>
2018	17.4
2019	16.7

Note i. (b) break-in-series.

Note ii. Eurostat Database (2020).

The share of persons between 25 and 64 years who participated in formal or non-formal education doubled in nine years; from 6.2% in 2010 to 12.0% in 2019 (Table 22). This is also slightly higher than that of the EU-28 average of 11.3%. The National Employment Policy (2014) identified life-long learning as an important indicator to promote education among all persons (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014).

Table 22. *Life-Long learning indicator for persons between 25 and 64 years (LLL)*

Year	No.
2010	6.2
2015	7.4
2016	7.8
2017	10.6 <sup>(b)</sup>
2018	10.9

Note i. (b) break-in-series.

Note ii. Eurostat Database (2020).

The tertiary educational attainment indicator measures the percentage of persons between 30 and 34 years who achieved a tertiary level of education. Figures show a large increase in the share of persons with tertiary education; 22.1% in 2010 to 37.8% in 2019 (Table 23). The figure surpassed the target set by the EU of 33% in 2020.

Table 23. *Tertiary Educational Attainment for Persons aged 30-34*

Year	No.
2010	22.1
2015	29.1
2016	32.0
2017	33.5

2018	34.7
2019	37.8

Note. Eurostat Database (2020)

(v) Major social welfare trends such as disadvantage risks, welfare benefit receipt levels

The severe material deprivation rate for Malta was on the increase from 2006 (3.9%) to 2015 (8.5%) and then dropped significantly in 2016 (4.4%) and kept declining until in 2018 it reached 3.0% (Table 24). However, in 2019 a higher rate was recorded (3.7%). In 2018, the severe material deprivation rate for EU-28 was nearly double that of Malta (5.9%, 3.0%).

The SMDR for children under 18 years was on the increase from 2007 (6.4%) to 2014 (14.1% and then started declining until 2018 (4.0%). An increase was recorded in 2019, reaching 4.8%. The material deprivation indicator for Malta was significantly lower than that of the EU-28 of 6.6 per cent.

Table 24. Severe material deprivation rate (SMDR)

Year	SMDR %	
	Children less than 18 years	Total
2010	7.7	6.5
2015	10.6	8.5
2016	6.1	4.4
2017	5.1	3.3
2018	4.0	3.0
2019	4.8	3.7

The SMDR for lone-parent households decreased drastically from 2010 to 2019 (28.7% as opposed to 14.8%). However, the SMDR is still very high when compared to other types of households with children. In 2019, the lowest SMDR was recorded for two adults with one child (0.2%) (Table 25).

Table 25. Severe material deprivation rate (SMDR) by household type

Year	Household Type				Total
	One adult with children	Two adults with one child	Two adults with two children	Two adults with three or more children	
			%		
2010	28.7	2.7	2.4	3.4	6.5
2015	24.4	4.7	5.8	11.6	8.5
2016	20.7	2.4	2.2	4.9	4.4
2017	16.9	1.7	1.8	6.6	3.3
2018	16.5	3.4	0.5	2	3
2019	14.8	1.2	2.6	1.7	3.7

Note. Eurostat Database (2020)

#### (vi) Housing problems

The overcrowding rate can be an indicator for housing problems. In Malta, the rate was stable over the years; 3.8% in 2004 to 3.4% in 2018. The highest rate was recorded in 2013 — 4.5%. When compared with the EU-28, the rate for Malta is significantly lower (3.4% as opposed to 15.5%) (Table 26).

The rate is higher for children under 18 years; 4.7% in 2019. The overcrowding rate for children was on the increase from 2004 to 2011, reaching a peak of 7.4% in 2011. The trend shows a steady decline since 2012. This indicator is significantly lower than that of the EU-28 average of 21.9%.

Table 26. *Overcrowding rate (OCR)*

Year	OCR %	
	Children less than 18 years	Total
2010	6.4	4.0
2015	6.2	3.8
2016	5.0	3.0
2017	4.8	3.0
2018	4.7	3.4

Also, in 2018 the housing cost over burden rate for Malta was significantly lower than the EU-28 average (1.7% as opposed to 10.4%) (Table 27). This discrepancy is present across the time series.

Table 2. *Housing cost over burden rate*

Year	%
2010	3.7
2015	1.1

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2016	1.4
2017	1.4
2018	1.7

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*Summary: The broader socio-economic context and trends which influence children's, parental and family circumstances and environments:*

The last decade witnessed a decrease in the fertility rate in Malta resulting in a higher share of one-child households. Various reasons may be attributed to this phenomenon which may be explained by the onset of the second demographic transition (Abela, 2016). An increase in female employment along the years, lower unemployment rates, people retiring at a later age hence informal care for children is not always available, persons getting married at an older age, and the increase in women having only one child either out of choice or because of the difficulty in finding a good work family balance all came to bear on the demographic situation.

Employment was a success story for Maltese families and many women joined the labour market. The increase in female employment resulted from the introduction of Government policies to attract more women to the labour market which were mentioned in Section 3 (ii). Even though female employment has increased dramatically over the years, the gender pay gap in Malta still increased indicating a larger disparity between genders with women being less likely to be given or opting for occupations in the higher echelons (Baldacchino et al., 2016).

Meanwhile, the introduction of new legislations over the years such as the divorce law, the civil unions act, the civil marriage legislation, and the cohabitation bill led to an increase in new family forms and a greater tolerance towards diversity among families. Figures also show an increase in the number of lone-parent families in Malta.

Severe material deprivation rate for Malta has been declining since 2016, and was half that recorded among EU countries in 2019.

The at-risk-of-poverty rate (ARP) for Malta has been increasing from 14.3 per cent in 2005 to 15.5% in 2010, reaching 17.1% in 2019. Results show that the at-risk-of-poverty rate for lone parents is much higher than that of the total population. Malta places sixth from last with regard to the ARP among lone parents, together with Croatia, Greece, Ireland, UK and Lithuania (Eurostat, 2020). A high ARP rate for MT was also recorded for households with two and more children when compared with other EU countries. The lowest ARP rate for Malta is recorded

among household with two adults and one dependent child. This also places Malta at the lowest end when compared with other European countries.

In terms of education, the number of those going to tertiary education increased dramatically. However, the reduction of early school leavers was below the European targets. Whereas attempts were made to help multistressed families in their own homes (177 were being helped), three times as many children were still in residential care. The number of children in foster care did not increase over the years. It is not possible to compare how we fare with other countries in the EU in this regard.

#### **14.4 The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions, and actors' which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision:**

- *Membership to the EU;*

Yes

- *Relationship with European Union (not more than 10 lines)*

As indicated in (i), EU Membership considerably shapes policy at the national level. Relations with the European Union fall within the remit of the Policy Development and Programme Implementation Directorate of each Ministry. This Directorate is directly responsible for coordinating European Union related matters, both at a domestic level and with other European Union stakeholders, and for coordinating the formulation of the Ministry's position on policies proposed by the European Union. It is also tasked to assist in the drawing up of policies in matters relating to social affairs; and to coordinate and monitor the implementation of European Union co-financed projects and programmes pertaining to the Ministry.

- *Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy (not more than 10 lines)*

The Ministry for Social Justice and Solidarity, the Family and Children's Rights (MSFC)<sup>25</sup> is the Ministry responsible for social policy in Malta. In the compilation of policies, various inputs are sought at development stage both internally within the administration as well as externally such as NGOs, civil society, academia, etc. Consultations are tailor-made to the particular sector being targeted. Notwithstanding, fully-fledged public consultations are undertaken to ensure

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<sup>25</sup> Previously known as the Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity (MFCS) or as the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity (MFSS).

maximum visibility. By way of example, during these last few years, policies have been published which specifically relate to children and their families, namely: the National Children's Policy (Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity, 2017b) and National Strategic Policy for Positive Parenting 2016-2024 (Abela & Grech Lanfranco, 2016), the National Adoption Strategy for Children and their Families 2019-2022 (Social Care Standards Authority, 2019). The Office of the Commissioner for Children has been entrusted with the monitoring, evaluation, and reporting on the progress related to the implementation of the National Children's Policy. The National Strategic Policy for Positive Parenting 2016-2024 is being implemented by an inter-ministerial Positive Parenting (PP) Taskforce consisting of professionals in the field. The National Adoption Strategy for Children and their Families 2019-2022 sets an annual review and evaluation on each of its priority areas to be undertaken by a Monitoring and Evaluation Committee established within the Social Care Standards Authority (SCSA).

- *Influential lobbying groups, (not more than 10 lines)*

Social policy lobbying in Malta is primarily done by NGOs in their role as advocates on behalf of their clients. This is apart from their role as service providers. Influential NGOs that provide support services and advocate on behalf of vulnerable groups include Caritas, St Jean Antide Foundation, Inspire Foundation, Graffiti, Millennium Chapel Foundation, *Malta Children's Associations Network* (MaltaCAN), etc. Groups related to specific target populations (e.g. persons on the Autism Spectrum) and self-help groups are also influential lobbying groups.

Trade Unions and Employer's Associations are also very influential particularly on work-life balance and family-friendly issues.

- *Influential policy/research networks*

Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society (MFWS): In recent years, another initiative which is seen to contribute towards more active citizenship and participation as well as the development of more evidence in the area of wellbeing, concerns the President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society (PFWS)<sup>26</sup>, set up in 2014 and renamed MFWS. The PFWS, a non-profit entity established with the aim of building evidence on issues contributing towards a better quality of life, seeks to foster an inclusive and democratic participatory framework by creating a safe space for dialogue and participation, in its search for academic and popular wisdom. For this purpose, apart from various fora dealing with a number of social aspects such as disability,

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<sup>26</sup> Entitled Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society (MFWS) since April 2019.

childhood, families and communities, the Foundation has set up the following entities: a National Institute for Childhood, an Observatory for Living with Dignity, a Centre for Freedom from Addiction, and a National Family Research Centre which focuses on family-related matters (PFWS, 2019).

Moreover, the University of Malta (particularly the Faculty for Social Wellbeing, the Department of Sociology, the Department of Economics, and the Faculty of Education) all carry out research in the area of children and families.

- *The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support*

Malta is a parliamentary representative republic, with the President of Malta as the head of state and the Prime Minister as the head of government and cabinet. Parliament has two standing committees that are relevant to family policy/family support: the Family Affairs Committee and the Social Affairs Committee. A Joint Committee between these two committees is also convened.

- *The democratic system and main political parties; unitary vs federal state structures; centralised vs decentralised structures) (not more than 10 lines)*

Malta has a unitary, centralised state structure, with some limited functions devolved to 68 local councils who are responsible for the general upkeep and embellishment of their locality.

- *The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular (e.g., Ministry roles, national vs local/regional government roles); (not more than 10 lines)*

The Ministry for Social Justice and Solidarity, the Family and Children's Rights (MSFC) is the Ministry responsible for social policy in Malta. Further information in relation to the Ministry may be found on [www.family.gov.mt](http://www.family.gov.mt).

Local/regional governments do not have a statutory role in family support or services, however some local councils work closely with central Government and offer various basic services or logistical support.

- *The ways in and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policymaking and reviews; (not more than 10 lines)*

Consultations with various external stakeholders during the policymaking and review phase is regarded as a best practice and are usually implemented. All national policies are issued for public consultation.

During the drafting of the National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024, consultative outreach was carried out, consisting of eight public meetings (involving local organisations) and a week of artistic and cultural activities with a focus on Children and Poverty. It was later published for public consultation as a Green Paper.

The National Children's Policy included consultation with children, relevant stakeholders, and the general public since its initial drafting. It takes on board the views of a wide stratum of children between the ages of four and 17 years — 311 in all — with the aim of capturing the vast realities and experiences of children and their various needs, wants and aspirations. Subsequently, the draft policy actions were issued for public consultation in September 2016. In addition, the Policy builds upon the *Draft National Children's Policy Document* (2011) and refers to various consultation exercises throughout recent years, as well as takes due cognisance of several other relevant studies (some of which included consultations with children).

A draft document of the Strategic Policy for Positive Parenting 2016-2024 was issued for public consultation prior to its publication. A number of consultation meetings were held with the various stakeholders across four different Ministries including the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry for Justice and the Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity. Children in schools were invited to give their views on such a strategy. Similarly, parents were invited to participate. The Strategy was written following these consultations.

Currently the Task Force responsible for the implementation of the Strategy is involving the Children's Council within the Office of the Commissioner for Children to give its views. The Task Force is aware that the parents need to be included more in the rolling out of the Strategy and plan to include them.

The needs expressed by specific user groups are taken into account at the planning, design and implementation phase when drafting *The Sustainable Communities, Housing for Tomorrow* policy (2019) (Housing Authority, 2019c).

The Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Strategy (2017) took into account the views of victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence about difficulties encountered when accessing the services (Ministry for European Affairs and Equality, 2017).

The Child Protection Act passed on to its third reading after amendments had taken place, following weeks of consultation along with the concerned stakeholders and the general public (Minor Protection (Alternative Care) Act, 2019).

The National Inclusive Education Framework (2019) promotes the active participation of students, parents, teachers, and LSEs to enhance the educational journey of all learners (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2019).

**14.5 List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year 2000. For each policy document indicate:**

*(a) Whether participation of families and young people has been mentioned in the document*

- The latest main strategic policy documents in the area of family and/or young people are:
  - National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024
  - National Strategic Policy for Positive Parenting 2016-2024
  - National Children's Policy (2017)
  - Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Strategy (2017)
  - The National Adoption Strategy for Children and their Families 2019-2022
  - The Sustainable Communities, Housing for Tomorrow policy (2019)
  - Minor Protection (Alternative Care) Act (2019)
  - The National Inclusive Education Framework (2019)
- Other relevant strategies launched by the Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity (MFCS) and which are seen to be dedicated to families (including young people) according to various target areas include:
  - The Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act 2000
  - National Drugs Policy (2008)
  - National Policy on the Rights of Persons with Disability (2014)
  - Renting as a Housing Alternative: White Paper Rental Market (2018)
  - National Alcohol Policy 2018-2023
  - National Strategy for Persons with Disability 2020-2030

- Malta has a legal obligation to monitor and implement The UN Convention on The Rights of Persons with Disability

For each of the policy documents indicated in the second bullet, information relating to **participation** in these documents are as follows:

- National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024

This strategic policy endorses the promotion of children's and young people's social participation, as well as the consolidation of outreach and preventative services to enable early identification and intervention of high-risk children and youth (Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity, 2014).

- National Strategic Policy for Positive Parenting 2016-2024

It is stated in the document that the Task Force works hand in glove with professionals in the field in the implementation of policies. The Office of the Commissioner for Children, who sits on the Task Force, holds regular meetings with children to discuss their views on parenting. The Task Force in charge of the Strategic Policy convenes a meeting with the Forum for children on an annual basis to listen to their views (Abela & Grech Lanfranco, 2016).

- National Children's Policy (2017)

Various policy actions are written with the aim of enhancing the meaningful participation of children and adolescents in society. Some of these policy actions include:

- the promotion of monitoring, awareness raising and sensitisation of information regarding issues that directly or indirectly concern children.
- the promotion of empowerment, inclusion, and active involvement of children within society, whilst also generating awareness among children to be responsible citizens and to respect all members of society.
- the recognition and promotion of children as active citizens by engaging them in democratic processes, social participation, environmental activism and innovation, volunteering and social entrepreneurship.
- the ensuring that the views presented by children through participation in forums and consultations are duly considered by policymakers.

- the ensuring that views presented by children are taken into account through democratic participation by extending voting rights to young people aged 16 and over for all state, local and European elections and referenda.
- the provision that children have access to remedy if there has been a breach of their rights as provided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and promote awareness of the services provided by the Office of the Commissioner for Children (Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity, 2017b).
- Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Strategy (2017)

This Strategy states that the views of victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence about difficulties encountered when accessing the services (Ministry for European Affairs and Equality, 2017).

- The National Adoption Strategy for Children and their Families 2019-2022

This strategy was launched by the Social Care Standards Authority (SCSA)<sup>27</sup> in 2019, and is based on the principles derived from the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and the 1993 Hague Convention in Respect of Inter-country Adoption. The three priority areas<sup>28</sup> and the specific focus on children's active participation in this strategy, aim to consolidate and expand efforts to improve services for currently adopted children and their families, as well as prospective adoptive families and children. It is noted in the policy that the children's opinion is to be obtained in an age-appropriate manner during the adoption process.

- The Sustainable Communities, Housing for Tomorrow policy (2019)

The Sustainable Communities, Housing for Tomorrow is committed to providing social and affordable accommodation based on the needs of vulnerable groups in society. It focuses on the relationship between vulnerabilities, housing, wellbeing and socio-economic to prevent social exclusion and to address people who are more at risk of such exclusion. The policy identifies persons with a low income; experiencing a family conflict; being taken care of by others; with school problems; form part of a sexual, gender or ethnic minority group; with a criminal record; live in a deprived neighbourhood, with mental health problems, of a certain age-group or have a disability as vulnerable people in society (Housing Authority, 2019c). The needs of expressed

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<sup>27</sup> This Authority falls under the remit of MFCS.

<sup>28</sup> The three priority areas posited by this strategy are that of: attaining a client-centred approach; promoting professional development of adoption agencies and staff; and establishing an integrated approach.

by specific user groups are taken into account at the planning, design, and implementation phase. The policy proposes data collection of the user needs to make informed decisions with regards to the final design and service provision. The input of specific users in the program is recommended both at the post-implementation of the service, as well as in the monitoring stage of the policy (Housing Authority, 2019c).

- Minor Protection (Alternative Care) Act (2019)

The Child Protection Act passed on to its third reading after amendments had taken place, following weeks of consultation along with the concerned stakeholders and the general public (Minor Protection (Alternative Care) Act, 2019).

This law introduced the following:

- That the children will now be participating at each stage of the process and their interests will be represented by a Children's Advocate;
- That the children will be heard in a suitable and calm environment that offers them security, away from the courts (Ministry for the Family Children's Rights and Social Solidarity June 2020).
- The National Inclusive Education Framework (2019)
  - Promotes the active participation of all learners in decision making
  - Encourages a school-parent partnership in assessing learners' needs
  - A collaboration between teachers and LSEs for the learners' benefit (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2019).

*(b) The extent to which such participation has been implemented (no line limit here)*

- National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024

The following are measures which feed into this strategic policy and which promote the participation of families and young people in democratic life:

- The LEAP Centres situated across various localities in Malta and Gozo aim to combat poverty and social exclusion through employment, capacity building, social integration and social mobility. A number of community workshops, whereby families and young people can voice their socio-economic concerns, are held. These workshops are currently on hold due to the pandemic.

- The National Strategic Policy for Positive Parenting 2016-2024

The Task Force has adopted the following measures to enhance participation:

- The professionals in the field give their views on the implementation of the measures. This approach was consistently adopted in the implementation of the Positive Parenting Strategy during the Perinatal Period. The parents were involved through feedback from the NGO Parent-Infant Mental Health Alliance Malta (PIMHA).
- The Office of the Commissioner for Children, who sits on the Task Force, holds regular meetings with children to discuss their views on parenting. The Task Force in charge of the Strategic Policy convenes a meeting with the Forum for children on an annual basis to listen to their views.
- Similarly, the measures related to the Family Court involved the participation of the professionals involved including the Director, mediators, and the Judiciary. Parents and children gave their views on the matter to the Commissioner for children, and their views were heard during the implementation process.
- The policy implementation is ongoing.
- The National Children's Policy (2017) which has been drafted in consultation with children, relevant stakeholders and the general public since its initial drafting has been consistently trying to involve children through the following measures:
  - The Child Participation Assessment Tool (CPAT) aimed at capturing the reality of child participation in different sectors and at various levels in Malta, with a view to improve this access to participation, particularly for those of whom participation is non-existent or limited, e.g. children at risk of poverty or social exclusion.
  - The Office of the Commissioner for Children has carried out a series of workshops in 27 schools to familiarize children with a child-friendly version of the National Children's Policy (Office of the Commissioner for Children, 2017), and thus also involve them in the monitoring of this Policy. Through these workshops, the participants became more familiar with the Policy, as well as the UNCRC. The participants also gave their ideas on how the Policy can be implemented effectively. Throughout 2019, the Office of the Commissioner for Children has been working together with students attending the Institute for Creative Arts in order to create videos and other material which will be used to promote the UNCRC.

- As part of its ongoing consultation process, this Office undertakes regular initiatives to encourage children's participation in policy development and delivery with the aim that these take on board children's needs and wishes and provide a realistic and accurate picture of the situations being faced by children. Children and adolescents' participation in the 'Rights 4U live-in' and 'European Network of Young Advisors (ENYA)' facilitate this process.
- The National Adoption Strategy for Children and their Families (2019-2022)

It is noteworthy to consider that this strategy was preceded by the first National Conference on Adoptions, during which adopted people and their families actively participated, leading policymakers and practitioners in the field to better understand the challenges and the way forward. Participation is being implemented in that the children's opinion is elicited.

- Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Strategy (2017)

During implementation, victims and survivors voice out their concerns through the various NGOs but namely through SOAR. When the Commission visits the shelters there is also the opportunity for victims to speak to us and update us on what is happening.

- The Sustainable Communities, Housing for Tomorrow policy (2019)

The participation of children is visible through the type of projects that the Sustainable Communities Board receives. Since 2019, a total of six projects, three of which include children, have been funded. These include:

1. Richmond Foundation which is offering a service to mothers suffering from mental health related issues. Here, many children end up in care. Hence, the NGO conducted research directly with children asking them whether they prefer staying with their mothers or not. Based on their findings, Richmond designed the programme to include children.
  2. Dar Bla Hitan which is run by Mid-Dlam għad-Dawl offers a service to prisoners by reintegrating the prisoner into their respective families. A systemic family approach will be used to assist children and partners. The property was also designed to cater to the presence of children, e.g., to do homework or chat with their fathers.
  3. Fondazzjoni Sebħ, which is still at its very inception since funds are still to be awarded to the organisation (Scicluna, 2020).
- Minor Protection (Alternative Care) Act 2019

Child participation is implemented in each and every case that is brought before the Court, or before any one of the administrative Boards mentioned in the Act, as it is now mandatory for the Court to consider the child's views before passing judgement. There is also a presumption to make sure that children's views are not only heard but also considered, that the Court shall note down in its judgement that the Child's views were considered. There is also a presumption at law under this Act that the children being spoken to have enough knowledge to comprehend their situation. In this way, all those involved cannot simply ignore their obligation to take the minor's views into consideration, simply because in their opinion the child is not able to understand what is going on. Moreover, all those involved in Child Protection shall also consider the child's views during their professional duties. (Ellul personal communication by email 25/11/20)

#### **14.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services:**

##### *(i) The priorities in child welfare and family policy*

Though the coordination of social welfare remains largely centralised, over the years there have been various efforts contributing towards greater decentralisation in service provision and programme implementation. One of the earliest initiatives in this regard was the setting up of social security district offices spread around the Maltese islands<sup>29</sup> aimed at “reaching out to provide assistance and advice on social security matters” (Department of Social Security, 2014, p. 29).

Another development in the provision of decentralised initiatives on a community level took place around 14 years ago, through the establishment of an “ACCESS” community-based family centre in Cottonera, followed by the setting up of another three centres in other disadvantaged localities. This model presents a one-stop shop approach offering multiple services and support on a number of areas including training, employment, social benefits, childcare service, as well as a wide range of social work and community services aimed at combating poverty and social exclusion. Since 2014, the centres have been transformed into LEAP Centres which specifically aim to combat poverty and social exclusion through a more grassroots outreach-oriented and integrated approach. Following this successful LEAP pilot project, locally-based Family Resource Centres and Regional Development Centres (commonly

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<sup>29</sup> 22 in Malta and 2 in Gozo.

known as LEAP Centres) were set up with the aim of providing a point of reference within the community through the provision of various forms of social support. These Centres also aim to foster more inclusive communities through the empowerment and participation of disadvantaged groups, and collaborative networking among stakeholders.

Furthermore, a pilot study was launched in 2015 offering a home-based therapeutic service for multi-stressed families where the children are at risk of being taken away from home. This service aimed to support these parents and children helping them to bounce back from adversity. Following the success of the pilot study, the service was offered in four other localities across Malta and Gozo. This was a sensible solution, and provided an important source of support to parents and children before considering out of home care.

As from 2019, the LEAP Project, the Home-Based Therapy Service (HBTS) and the former Community Services of Appoġġ have been integrated into the Agency for Community and Therapeutic Services (ACTS) within the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS). Following this change, LEAP centres are now referred to as community centres (Foundation for Social Welfare Services, 2020).

The Maltese government undertook a restructuring exercise of the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS). Through this reform, Aġenzija Sapport became an autonomous body. This agency supports persons with disability in achieving independence, to the best of their ability, and thus be able to live within the community. It provides services of support when required to enhance their quality of life.

Moreover, through the use of multidisciplinary teams made up of social workers, community workers, psychologists and other professionals, these reform initiatives are envisaged to act as a cluster-based network which facilitate a more integrated and holistic approach to the needs of individual citizens, families, and communities.

Welfare to work strategies with a special emphasis on empowering more women to join the labour market (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014) have been an important backdrop which has encouraged more women to work as highlighted further above.

The various strategic policies related to children and families, namely the Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024; the National Strategic Policy for Positive Parenting 2016-2024; the National Children's Policy; the Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Strategy (2017); the National Adoption Strategy for Children and their Families 2019-2022; Sustainable Communities: Housing for Tomorrow (2019); the Child Protection Act (2019); and the National Inclusive Education Framework (2019) are all indicative of the priorities in child welfare and family policy.

The National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion 2014-2024 aims to reduce poverty which is an important first step towards the wellbeing of children and their families.

The National Strategic Policy for Positive Parenting 2016-2024 recognises the importance of warm and caring relationships among family members and the positive effect on the children's sense of wellbeing, healthy development, and future outcomes. It takes a family life cycle approach to do this and adopts a universal and targeted approach giving special importance to families which are hard to reach, and those who are living in adversity. Early intervention and prevention are given high priority. The policy starts from the perinatal period supporting both fathers and mothers who present with mental health difficulties, and looks into other adverse situations including the relationship between the parents. The strategic policy will also be implemented at the well-baby clinics and in childcare centres, kindergartens, and schools. Parents with children with disability are already given support. Families who are undergoing court proceedings at the Family Court were support through evidence-based parenting programmes that help parents continue to support their children during the separation process are on offer (Abela & Grech Lanfranco, 2016).

The National Children's Policy (2017) seeks to sensitise children and to empower them to participate and be actively involved within society. This policy ensures that children views are considered, and that they are engaged in democratic processes, environmental activism, volunteering, social participation and social entrepreneurship.

The Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Strategy (2017) promotes gender equality and aims to prevent gender-based violence. This policy ensures the provision of adequate and timely information to victims, provides a free 24-hour helpline, ensuring age-appropriate support services for child witnesses and provides financial support, housing, as well as training opportunities for victims to gain financial independence (Ministry for European Affairs and Equality, 2017).

The National Adoption Strategy for Children and their Families 2019-2022 in turn consolidates and expands on inter-country adoption and addresses local adoption, including adoption following five years or even less with a foster family, post adoption services, children searching their origin, and the continuous professional development of professionals in the field. It also provides support to parents and gives importance to the voice of the child (Vassallo, 2019).

The Sustainable Communities, Housing for Tomorrow policy (2019) together with a number of schemes ensure adequate housing for our community. These include:

- Equity Sharing assists persons over 40s and their children who are ineligible for a bank loan hence find it difficult to purchase a house (Housing Authority, 2019a).
- Semi-independent living concept helps people to live independently either in their own home or in accommodation with staff on site for integration within the community (Housing Authority, 2011).
- Scheme for persons with disability provides financial aid and technical advice to persons with disability to carry out adaptation works related to their disability in their residence for all ages (Housing Authority, n.d.).
- Grant to assists owners in the construction and/ or completion or rehabilitation of a first dwelling (Housing Authority, 2015).
- Scheme on 10% Deposit for the Purchase of a Property helps people who despite being eligible for a loan do not have the required 10% of the property to be given as a lump sum (Housing Authority, 2020).
- 'Nikru biex nassistu' Scheme encourages people who have finished properties to lend them to the government, and will be used as social accommodation (Housing Authority, 2019b).

Yet, renting is still a problem and there is still need for affordable rents. However, through the change in the Housing Benefit (HB) Scheme and the Private Residential Lease Act, things have taken a positive turn. Now, tenants have the right to a lease contract and the HB scheme is calculated case by case on the household's net income. Finally, all those households that were affected by unemployment and could prove it (including domestic violence) were given the full HB (Scicluna, 2020).

The Minor Protection (Alternative Care) Act (2019) prioritises children's rights especially those children living in out of home care. This bill puts forward the following changes:

- (1) foster carers can file a court request to adopt a child who has been in their custody for more than five years;
- (2) foster carers are allowed to travel abroad with their foster child after notifying the child protection agency;
- (3) the Fostering board is made of seven members instead of five, one of whom should have a psychologist warrant to help children in difficult situations;
- (4) the proposal of a special guardian to take care of vulnerable children;

- (5) it is mandatory for professionals dealing with children to inform the authorities of known or suspected abuse cases;
- (6) Protection orders will be more targeted toward the child's needs;
- (7) the Director responsible for the Minor's protection would be chosen through a public call and is required to have five years' experience in child services; and
- (8) lawyers will be assigned to cases involving minors.

(Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity, 2019).

The National Inclusive Education Framework (2019) promotes the setting of an inclusive school environment that ensures that all learners have the opportunity to obtain the necessary skills and attitudes to be active citizens, and to succeed at work and in society. This policy celebrates diversity in schools and suggests that it is used as a learning opportunity to foster the inclusion of all learners (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2019).

*(ii) The main types of family provision and support and key features (e.g. different types of cash support (universal and targeted, work-family reconciliation measures and children's/family services, childcare etc) (no line limit here)*

- Adoption Benefit

An Adoption Benefit may be awarded to a person who adopts a child.

- Adoption Leave Benefit

The Adoption Leave Benefit may be awarded to a person who adopts a child, and is an entitlement of four weeks.

- Child in Care Benefit – Residential Service

Child in Care Benefit – Foster Care Allowance is given to Residential Homes that provide a residential service to children. Moreover, this allowance is paid until a child reaches 21 years of age.

- Children's Allowance and Birth or Adoption Bonus

Children's Allowance is awarded to married couples, civil union couples, cohabiting couples, single parents, separated parents or returned migrants, having the care and custody of their children under 16 years of age. A one-time bonus of €300 is also given for every new-born or adopted child, and for births or adoptions taking place after 1st January 2020.

- Disabled Child Allowance

A Disabled Child Allowance may be granted to children who are certified to be suffering from a physical and/or mental disability. This allowance is paid in addition to the Children's Allowance and is valid until children turn 16 years or 14 years of age in case of visual impairment.

- Maternity Benefit

The Maternity Benefit may be awarded to a pregnant woman, and is of a maximum of 14 weeks entitlement. The first part of the benefit consists of eight weeks' entitlement before the due date of the child. The second part of the benefit consists of six weeks' entitlement after the birth of the child. In those cases where the application is submitted after the birth of the child, only one payment is made.

- Maternity Leave Benefit

The Maternity Leave Benefit may be awarded to a pregnant woman and is of a maximum of four weeks' entitlement.

- Maternity / Adoption Leave Trust Claim

The Maternity Leave Contribution that came into effect as of 1st July 2015 through Legal Notice 257 of 2015 (Trusts and Trustees Act Cap. 331.), is to be paid by Employers for all their employees in the private sector. This scheme is also applicable to a person who adopts a child. The Public Service and Public Sector Entities; Authorities, Agencies, and Public Corporations are exempt from this scheme.

The rate of the Maternity Leave Contribution is 0.3% of the basic weekly wage as published in Legal Notice 258 of 2015 (Trusts and Trustees Act Cap. 331.), which is an addition to the 10th Schedule of the Social Security Act (Cap. 318.). Under this scheme, employers will pay the maternity/adoption leave to their employees for the first 14 weeks, and then apply for a refund from the Department of Social Security when the employee returns to work.

- Orphan's Allowance

An Orphan's Allowance may be awarded to a person who is entrusted with the care of a child if both parents of the child are deceased. Payment of an Orphan's Allowance is issued every four weeks in advance. This allowance is paid until the child reaches 16 years of age.

- Orphan's Supplementary Allowance

This allowance is paid for the period when the youngster is between 16 and 21 years of age.

- Student's Allowance

Student's Allowance is awarded to married couples, civil union couples, cohabiting couples, single parents, separated parents or returned migrants having the care and custody of a child, aged between 16 and 21 years. When children turn the age of 16 and are in full-time education and not receiving a stipend, or registering for work for the first time, they become entitled to a Student's Allowance.

- Supplementary Allowance – Head of Household (Single / Couple)

A Supplementary Allowance may be awarded to a person having a low income and is currently not in receipt of a Children's Allowance. This allowance is intended to help a person bridge his income requirements.

- Supplementary Allowance – Not Head of Household

A Supplementary Allowance may be awarded to a person having a low income and is currently not in receipt of a Children's Allowance. This allowance is intended to help a person bridge his income requirements.

- Free transport to school

Children attending primary, middle and secondary state schools are eligible for free school transport if they live more than 1km away from their school.

- Government Free Travel Schemes

Free public transportation service is offered to young people between 14 and 19 years and persons over 20 years who are still students for 12 months.

- Free of charge Matriculation examinations

Following the 2018 Budget, students are eligible for the SEC and MATSEC examinations without any fees.

- The Free Childcare Scheme

This is an initiative whereby Government provides free childcare services to parents/guardians of children aged 0-3 years who are in employment or are pursuing their education, with the aim to help families achieve a work-life balance. The childcare service is either provided directly through government services or alternatively through registered Childcare Centres.

- Skolasajf

This is a nationwide project offering non-compulsory education during the summer months. Children aged 3-16 may attend for a programme full of themed activities and outings. The service is offered in various centres around Malta and Gozo, utilising the premises of primary schools and resource centres. Skolasajf is offered both in the morning and in the afternoon.

- Klabb 3-16

This provides an after-school care service within the school setting and seeks to bridge the gap between the school day and the regular working hours of parents. The Klabb 3-16 programmes include support in homework, and support in learning languages, drama, sports, and Information Technology (IT).

- Child Development Assessment Unit (CDAU)

Children with various limitations and difficulties may attend the CDAU and are eligible for individual or group therapy. Occupational therapy is also provided to children from birth to 16 years to promote independence in learning, play and self-help tasks. Therapists also work in close collaboration with the children's family members, teachers and with other professionals of the multidisciplinary team (Government of Malta, 2020b).

All children between five and 16 years of age with mental or physical disability receive support from Learning Support Educators (LSEs). This support aims to facilitate a more inclusive educational environment for all children.

- Services for children with disability and their parents offered by Agenzija Sapport

Agenzija Sapport offers three community services groups to children, pre-teens, and teens, according to the needs observed by the Community Services team. The group structure gives service users the opportunity to become involved in a peer group, practise decision-making, and work towards self-advocacy.

Monthly workshops and support groups for families of children with disability. Parents, grandparents, carers or curators of children with disability who are under the age of 18 are eligible to participate in these sessions with the aim of discussing pre-planned topics of interest to the parents, followed by an open discussion as a support group in the second hour.

A series of online workshops aimed at supporting parents, carers and professionals. Different topics were discussed each week by a number of professionals who provided information and support to the participants (Agenzija Sapport, 2020).

- Support from other NGOs

Inspire Foundation offers a range of programmes for young people living with disabilities and their families through therapeutic, educational and leisure services; AD/HD Family Support Group offering support for children and their parents through events, activities, courses and meetings; and Down Syndrome Association Malta that supports and empowers children born with Down Syndrome and their families through activities, services, projects, and advice.

- The Special Education and Resource Centres Section within the Student Services Department in the Directorate for Educational Services provides a number of services that support students with individual educational needs in mainstream schools including:
  - Peripatetic Teachers for students with visual or hearing impairment in mainstream schools.
  - Early Intervention Service for children with special needs who are still of pre-school age or have started their school experience at kindergarten level.
  - Home Tuition Peripatetic Teachers for students who are absent from school on a long-term basis due to chronic illness or injury
  - Teachers working in Hospital Classes
  - Access to Communication and Technology Unit (ACTU)
  - Autism Spectrum Disorder Team
  - Transition Organisers
  - Learning Support Centres (Government of Malta, 2020a).
- The Inclusive Employment Services Division (Jobsplus) in partnership with the Lino Spiteri Foundation

Through the implementation of the VASTE Programme, multiple training options are offered to jobseekers with a disability. The Job Bridge Training Centre offers outreach initiatives by delivering information sessions to young people in local educational institutes (secondary and post-secondary) to create awareness about Jobsplus' services for vulnerable jobseekers (The Lino Spiteri Foundation, 2020).

*(iii) The types of funding involved such as state, charity vs private sector providers and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners*

Family support services are fully funded from national funds. Agencies working in this sector may also utilise EU funds for their projects. The Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations also offers VO Funds to registered voluntary organisations.

*(iv) Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations*

- The National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024 provides for the setting up of a national structure to monitor and evaluate the progress sustained within the different policy areas of the strategy across its operative term. Following the launch of this strategic policy in December 2014, the Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity set up an Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) bringing together representatives from the key Ministries covering the six dimensions underpinning the vision and strategic direction of the policy, namely the:
  - Ministry for Education to report upon the education dimension
  - Ministry for Finance and Employment (MFE) to report on the employment dimension
  - Ministry for Health (MFH) to report upon the health and environment dimension.
  - Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government (MJCL) to report upon the culture dimension.
  - Ministry for Social Justice and Solidarity, the Family and Children's Rights (MSJSFC) to report upon social benefits and social services dimensions.

The IMC ensures an open channel of communication that promotes synergy among the key stakeholders, thus facilitating the implementation of this strategic policy. The IMC meets on a quarterly basis and regularly compiles implementation updates. In line with its remit to monitor the implementation of the National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024, the IMC has, through its regular meetings and reporting, closely followed the introduction and progress of various measures and initiatives that have been undertaken by different Ministries to address the 94 actions emanating from this strategic policy. Two Implementation and Evaluation Reports were published for the first six years since the launch of this Policy (Ministry for the Family, Children's rights and Social Solidarity, 2017a); Ministry for Social Justice and Solidarity, the Family and Children's Rights, 2020).

- The National Strategic Policy for Positive Parenting 2016-2024

The Taskforce which was set up in 2018 is responsible for the implementation of the strategy of the Positive Parenting policy and issues an annual report regarding the implementation of the strategy.

- National Children's Policy (2017)

The Commissioner for Children is entrusted with the monitoring, evaluating, and reporting of the progress achieved under the different dimensions of the National Children's Policy.

- The National Adoption Strategy for Children and their Families (2019-2022)

This strategy sets an annual review and evaluation on each of its priority areas to be undertaken by a Monitoring and Evaluation Committee established within the Authority (Social Care Standards Authority, 2019). Several data collection tools including child participation will be used by the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee to assess whether the outcomes indicated for each priority area have been achieved within the indicated timeframe.

- Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Strategy (2017)

The Human Rights and Integration Directorate (HRID) is required to write a quarterly progress report on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. This report is then discussed with the Steering Group and feedback is taken on board. An annual report on the progress of the action plan is generated and presented to the Minister. During the implementation of this strategy, input is also provided by GREVIO (Ministry for European Affairs and Equality, 2017).

- The Sustainable Communities, Housing for Tomorrow policy (2019)

This policy prioritises ongoing monitoring of social input. NGOs are also requested to provide an annual progress report. The Board is very active where community meetings for the neighbourhood are organised.

A limitation of this policy is that funding is at the discretion of the budget. Ideally, such projects should receive ongoing funds. Also, dilapidated properties take time to retrofit mainly because of planning issues where the category of a 'home' from an alternative perspective is still rather alien to planning policymakers (Scicluna, 2020).

- Minor Protection (Alternative Care) Act (2019)

In terms of the monitoring of this Act, the discretion lies exclusively in the hands of the Court and the Boards contemplated by the same Act.

- The National Inclusive Education Framework (2019)

There is no available data with regards to non-state schools (Director of the National School Support Services, personal communication, 2021).

*(v) Limitations in national and official data and statistics*

- Within MFCS, data on beneficiaries is held by the Department for Social Security (DSS).
- Some Eurostat indicators may report low reliability due to low population counts, particularly in more granular disaggregation's.
- Delay between data gathering and publication.
- Information gaps on the following topics: separations by years of marriage; the prevalence of cohabitation in Malta; the number of blended families; the number of intercultural marriages; and the prevalence of gay marriage is challenging for policy makers. Addressing such gaps would greatly contribute to evidence-based policy and practice and would help policymakers in their work with families (Abela, Vella, et al., 2020).

#### 14.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision

What are the prominent policy and practice developments related to family support services from children's rights, social equality and evidence-informed perspectives?

Prominent **policy developments** related to family support services in Malta include the National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024; the National Strategic Policy for Positive Parenting 2016-2024; the National Children's Policy (2017); the Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Strategy (2017); the National Adoption Strategy for Children and their Families 2019-2022; the Sustainable Communities, Housing for Tomorrow policy (2019), and the Minor Protection (Alternative Care) Act (2019).

Furthermore, free childcare for working parents, tax credits for women returning to work, the tapering of social benefits scheme, the in-work benefit scheme, and the Access to Employment (A2E) scheme contributed towards the increase of a significant number of females joining the labour market. Breakfast clubs and Club 3-16 after school set up previously were considered helpful.

Furthermore, policies for adequate and affordable housing were put forward by the Housing Authority

In terms of **practice development**, more Community centres were set up in disadvantaged localities to reduce poverty among vulnerable families through employment and education. A Home-Based Therapeutic Services (HBTS) started to be offered in four other localities (Għargħur, Fgura, Msida and one in the island of Gozo) to multi-stressed families within the community following the successful 2015 pilot study in Qawra.

In addition, a number of cash benefits were made available to support families and their children; including free transport to school and Free of charge Matriculation examinations, the Adoption Benefit, Adoption Leave Benefit, Child in Care Benefit, Children's Allowance and Birth, Adoption Bonus, Orphan's Allowance, and the Orphan's Supplementary Allowance.

*(i) What are the pressing policy, practice and research challenges impeding developments?*

#### *Policy challenges*

1. The present Government was committed to fight poverty. As can be seen from the Statistics above, severe material deprivation has gone down by 4.8 percentage points from 2015 to 2019. However, figures show that the at-risk-of-poverty rate increased from 15.5% in 2010 to 17.1% in 2019. Certain family groups like lone parents (42.9% in 2019) and families with three or more dependent children (33.1% in 2019) are still experiencing a poverty rate, which is higher than the European average. Policies and measures specifically related to precarious work to protect vulnerable groups, such as migrants and other sectors of the population, are also needed (Abela, Sammut Scerri, et al., 2020). This challenge has become even more pertinent in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Closely related to poverty, inequality and disadvantage, Malta still registered the second highest early school leaving rate among all European countries, despite the education reform aimed at addressing early school leavers and the increase in children continuing education past the age of 16, in 2019, Young persons who leave school early are more likely to stay on the unemployment register for a longer time. Early school leaving is also associated with low status occupations, less stable career patterns, unemployment in adulthood, criminal behaviour, and drug and alcohol abuse (European Commission, 2008).
3. Only a small proportion of persons with a disability find employment amounting to 0.07% of the total number of full-time and part-time workers. On the other hand, persons with a disability registering for employment amount to 9% suggesting that opportunities for employment for such persons is still restricted (personal communication with Lino Spiteri Foundation, 19/2/21)
4. Current family-friendly measures to sustain work-life balance may result in increased gender imbalance as women are more likely to make use of such arrangements (reduced working hours, telework, parental leave, career breaks and flexi-hours) to meet the needs of their children) (Azzopardi, 2017). Hence, the need to balance out care provision duties

and obligations between males and females must be reflected in policies developed to promote men's participation (Abela, Sammut Scerri, et al., 2020).

5. The National Children's Policy (2017) stresses the importance of child participation in different sectors. Workshops held for children to become more familiar with this Policy, the application of the Child Participation Assessment Tool (CPAT), as well as encouragement for adolescents and children to participate in the 'Rights 4U live-in' and 'European Network of Young Advisors (ENYA)', were amongst the measures implemented to consolidate further child participation structures. However, the participation in the International Survey of Children's Subjective Well-being (2020) suggests that there is a need for consolidating children's voices in policy actions related to health, education and wellbeing (Cefai & Galea, 2020). This can be achieved through child-friendly public policy consultations, by continuing to ensure all children know their rights and by creating new ways to take account of children's views in schools, communities, and nations (UNICEF Innocenti, 2020).
6. Lack of children's participation in family decisions was reported among a considerable number of Maltese children in the International Survey of Children's Subjective Well-being (2020). Children should be assigned more autonomy and voice in their families and other systems, such as school, to ensure a healthy well-being (Cefai & Galea, 2020). The strategy for Positive Parenting needs to take this into account and sensitise parents in more positive and democratic approaches regarding child participation in family

#### *Practice challenges*

1. The need for implementing and monitoring whole school policy with specific attention to discriminatory bullying among non-Maltese children who are more at risk of such behaviour (Cefai & Galea, 2020).
2. The lack of parental involvement in schools especially those parents and families who are disadvantaged is a gap that needs to be addressed as it affects the children's academic achievements. This requires engagements with parents and support such that they may become more involved in their children's education. Lack of communication from school with families, as well as the assumption that middle-class values should constitute the norm may result in hindering parents from participating in their children's education (Poppe, 2020; Cassar, 2020).
3. Long waiting lists and difficulty when applying for certain services, such as the Children and Young Persons Services (CYPS) and other services related to persons with disability or those with mental health difficulties, increase the stress on the families as they would

either need to increase their work to access services privately or provide the care which is lacking through the services (Abela, Sammut Scerri, et al., 2020). Saliba and Camilleri (2018) proposed the need to increase staff to reduce waiting times as well as extend opening times. They also highlighted the importance of having reviews by the same clinician to ensure continuity of care and improve the therapeutic relationship (Saliba & Camilleri, 2018).

4. According to Grech (2017), care workers in residential homes in Malta are faced with several challenges, including continuous responsibility of children, challenging working conditions resulting in high level of stress and burnout, lack of teamwork between carers and other professionals, and lack of resources. Hence, there is a need to attract more professionals in this field, as well as a need to retain experienced and trained staff. This can be achieved with adequate training and supervision, through a better pay, opportunities for promotion, and recognition of further training.
5. According to the survey carried out by Cefai and Galea (2020) children complained about the lack of space to play and engage in physical exercise. This is linked to low level of sports and physical exercise. Increasing good quality and child friendly spaces and enhancing security for children in localities will increase children's activity level and consequently their physical and mental health. Child obesity is a recurrent challenge in Malta. Over the last few years, Maltese children were placed among the top countries with obese children (Cefai & Galea, 2020).
6. According to a study by Cefai and Galea (2020) a considerable number of Maltese children, particularly eight- and 10-year-olds, do not have enough friends. Therefore, schools, families and the local community should seek ways to provide more opportunities to support children in making and maintaining friendships (Cefai & Galea, 2020).
7. Even though the majority of 10- and 12-year-old Maltese children are happy and full of energy, most are not calm (72%) and feel stressed (43%), where 15% of the children felt extremely stressed. Increased stress among children is mostly related to academic stress. Despite a decrease in extra private tuition there is a need for lower pressure at school, and the introduction of stress management techniques, such as mindfulness, to counter stress among children (Cefai & Galea, 2020).

### *Research challenges*

1. Limited and incomparable data among countries with the regards to children's sense of their mental well-being and mental health (UNICEF Innocenti, 2020).

2. Lack of comparable indicators regarding children's experience of violence and on child protection policies (UNICEF Innocenti, 2020).
3. Shortage of information on children's experience with regards to their participation, opinions, viewpoints, and choices in society (UNICEF Innocenti, 2020).
4. The latest statistics on persons with disability are available from the 2011 Census, hence there is no data available on the topic for the last 10 years.
5. Research gaps on different topics such as new family forms. Such gaps could also be filled if National Censuses were to take place on a more regular basis.

(ii) *What are the pressing gaps in provision?*

*Lack of preventive policies*

There is a gap in policies related to early intervention and hard-to-reach families which will hopefully be covered in part through the positive parenting strategy.

*Limited parental leave*

According to the Gender Equality Index (European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), 2019), Malta has one of the largest gender gaps in terms of eligibility for parental leave in Europe (31 p.p). In 2016, nearly all parental leave schemes and career breaks in the public sector were taken up by women. Also, Malta ranked 29th in terms of paid maternity leave and 32nd with regards to paid leave for fathers. At present, Maltese working women may benefit from 18 weeks of maternity leave – 14 weeks of which are paid by the employer and four weeks of which are paid by the Government at minimum wage, whereas Maltese working men are granted one fully-paid paternity leave day unless working in the public sector in which they are granted five fully-paid leave days (MyWage.org/Malta, 2019).

Also, parental leave and career breaks are not paid for. This creates an imbalance between the use of family-friendly measures between male and female workers which are ultimately taken up by females. Such situations result in consequences in terms of the financial aspect and social status, which to date discriminate against women who avail themselves of such measures.

*A low fertility rate*

Malta has the lowest total fertility rate in Europe — 1.23 in 2018 (Eurostat, 2020). In spite of free childcare, Malta is one of the topmost countries with a significant contribution to childcare from grandparents (51%, Eurofound, 2018). This is because only a small percentage (7%) of

parents are willing to send their children to childcare in their first year of life, and given the very short maternity leave and the inexistence of paternity leave, parents are obliged to turn to their parents for support given that they both have to work to be able to pay their house loan. Consequently, the demographic rate in Malta was the lowest in Europe in 2018, reaching 1.23. The average EU 28 total fertility rate was 1.56 (Eurostat, 2020).

### *Gender inequality*

Even though female employment has increased dramatically over the years, the gender pay gap in Malta continued to grow, indicating a larger disparity between genders from 7.8% in 2007 to 11.7% in 2018, placing Malta below the EU average of 15.7% (Eurostat, 2020).

Women are more likely than men to make use of family-friendly measures (Azzopardi, 2017). In addition, men's paid hours of work are greatest when there are children in the household aged seven to 12 years, while women's hours of paid work are greatest when they are in a couple relationship and are without children. Such demographics can greatly impact the gender equality in terms of job selection and progression, with women being more likely to work more than men when considering both paid and unpaid hours of work.

Women also find it challenging to participate in opportunities which enable them to prosper in their careers through furthering their education and training, mainly because of family responsibilities attributed to females that act as barriers for them to lifelong learning (EIGE, 2020).

### *A pressing policy response to support children and families in the context of COVID-19*

#### *The impact of COVID-19 on children and families*

School closure increased stress among all children (UNICEF Innocenti, 2020) while vulnerable children were more exposed to domestic violence, increased poverty, and inequality, had reduced access to healthy food and experienced higher family stress (OECD, 2020a). Children with disabilities experienced a disruption in their education and therapeutic support (OECD, 2020a). The children of immigrants and those of parents with a lower level of education were also impacted negatively as their parents tend to have fewer resources to help them in their homework, such as access to a computer and an internet connection at home (OECD, 2020b).

Home-schooling also, brought about additional child responsibilities for families, especially for women (UNICEF Innocenti, 2020).

Employment was significantly impacted by the pandemic, especially the accommodation and food services sector and the wholesale and retail trade sector. For this reason, employers are trying to maintain their workforce by reducing the actual hours worked of all their employees.

In fact, the Labour Force Survey depicted a decrease in the number of actual hours worked, from 37.0 hours in Quarter 2 2019 to 31.6 hours in Quarter 2 2020 (National Statistics Office, 2020c).

Redundancies in these sectors, as well as other jobs affected by the pandemic, were controlled with the wage supplement scheme provided by the government (Central Bank of Malta, 2020). This Government scheme will also bring about a drop in employees' wages most are earning less than usual (Central Bank of Malta, 2020). The labour market situation of immigrants was also impacted by this pandemic. The Labour Force Survey indicated a drop of 8.6 per cent in the average monthly basic salary of employees (€1,491 in Quarter 2 2020 as opposed to €1,632 in Quarter 1 2020 (National Statistics Office, 2020c).

Immigrants often have unstable jobs and are mostly employed in the hardest-hit sectors, such as the hospitality industry. Economic uncertainty among family members may affect children's mental well-being as they feel insecure (UNICEF Innocenti, 2020).

Remote working is not possible for all occupations. During the pandemic, office workers switched to working from home while receiving the same pay. However, lower-paid manual workers who could not carry out their job from home became reliant on government aid schemes (UNICEF Innocenti, 2020). This would thus increase inequality among certain groups in society.

The sudden disruption in the daily life of children and families that the COVID-19 pandemic brought with it impacted the mental wellbeing of many to the extent that requests for help were increased dramatically (Director of Psychiatry, personal communication, 2020).

#### *The support provided by the State*

In April 2020, the Maltese State Aid scheme with an estimated budget of €350 million was approved by the European Commission to support the Maltese economy during the COVID-19 pandemic (European Commission, 2020).

The Maltese Government introduced several support measures for businesses, employees, and vulnerable persons such as the wage supplement scheme, subsidised rates for rent and electricity, reduced stamp duties on property purchases and the introduction of a retail voucher scheme. In addition, fuel prices were reduced, the in-work benefit scheme was extended, and various new grants to businesses were introduced. In addition, a moratorium on

loan repayments, and a Malta Development Bank (MDB) COVID-19 Guarantee Scheme (CGS) were implemented as an economic recovery plan (Central Bank of Malta, 2020).

The Health Services responded to address the mental health needs of children and families by funding NGOs to carry out a phone-in support service, and by deploying health personnel to work in the main state mental health hospital. However certain sections of the populations were not adequately cared for due to a lack of human resources.

#### *Pressing policy responses*

- Adequate support for children negatively impacted by COVID-19 should be provided in a timely manner (Cefai & Galea, 2020).
- Tailor-made remote learning for children with disabilities.
- More investment in human resources in the area of mental health including online and blended support have become a priority.

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## 15 MOLDOVA - National report on family support policy & provision

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### **15.1 Trends and issues related to demography under each point and a short comment about trends**

#### *Data*

The data provided about Moldova starts from 2014 and is based on official revised statistics (the last census held in 2014) and refers to the population with usual residence in the Republic of Moldova (2.8 million persons in the 2014 Census), excluding the population that is not present in the country for one year and more. These revised data are much more up to date compared to the official statistics data up to 2014, which are related to the general stable population (3.5 million persons) and take migrants into account. Thus, statistical indicators were overestimated or underestimated, and consequently, the revised data are more connected to the reality of the Republic of Moldova.

#### *Population decline presents a key demographic trend in the Republic of Moldova*

The number of the population of the Republic of Moldova has been steadily decreasing since 1999. The number of the population with regular residence on January 1, 2019, was 2681.7 thousand persons; 190 thousand less than in 2014 (NBS, 2020). The main demographic indicators do not ensure the reproduction of the population, and the negative migration increases the depopulation process and the demographic ageing. Demographic forecasts show that in the coming decades the population decline will continue, and by 2035 the population of the country may fall to 2085 thousand inhabitants (Gagauz, O. coord., 2016)

#### *(i) Fertility rates*

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According to official revised data for the years 2014-2019, total fertility rate (TFR) oscillates between 1.89-1.77 children per woman of reproductive age (Table 1). In 2019, a decrease was registered when compared to the highest value of TFR of this period (in 2016 TFR was 1.89). Nevertheless, the stabilization of TFR values, observed in recent years compared to the unprecedented decrease in the first decade of the current century (in 2002 the total fertility rate had the lowest value - 1.44), is only a compensatory dynamic as a result of the disastrous fall over the late 1990s - early 2000s.

Table 1. *Total fertility rate and the average maternal age, Republic of Moldova*

Year	Total fertility rate	The average maternal age, years
2014	1.82	26.79
2015	1.87	27.34
2016	1.89	27.44
2017	1.82	27.63
2018	1.82	27.66
2019	1.77	27.77

Source: NBS data, <http://statbank.statistica.md/>

During the years 2014-2019, the absolute number of live births decreased from 40,909 to 32,022 children (NBS, UNICEF, 2020a). The peak of the fertility curve is placed in the interval of 25– to 29–year-olds, which means delayed fertility. Thus, for 2019 there is a significantly reduced fertility intensity in this age group, compared to the other years. Moreover, the reduction in the number of young people because of migration inevitably leads to a reduction in the number of births for calendar years.

*(ii) Families with children by the number of children*

According to the data from the last Population and Housing Census (2014), there is a significant reduction in households with children aged up to 18, from 45.8% registered in the 2004 Census to 35.2% (or 359463 households) in the 2014 Population and Housing Census.

In 2019, according to current revised statistics, the share of households with children aged up to 18 in the total of households decreased to 31.6% (Table 2); not to mention that over the last two decades, the Republic of Moldova has been facing the process of depopulation, with no visible signs of recovery, which is the cumulative result of the evolution of fertility, mortality, and external migration.

Table 2. *Share of households by the presence or not of children aged up to 18 in the household, 2014-2019, Moldova, %*

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019*
Households without children	64.8	66.1	66.8	67.4	68.3	68.4
Households with children	35.2	33.9	33.3	32.6	31.7	31.6

Source: HBS, NBS (2019); \* NBS, UNICEF (2020a)

In general, in the structure of households with children, the share of those with one child predominate. On average, 1.6 children return to a household with children.

In 2019, the structure of households with children was as follows: households with one child (47.1%), followed by households with two children - 39.5%, and households with three and more children - 13.4% (Table 3). Compared to 2014, the share of households with two, three or more children increased, while those with one child are decreasing.

Table 3. *Distribution of households with children aged up to 18, by number of children, 2014-2019, %*

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019*
Total households with children	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100
<i>from which:</i>						
with 1 child	55.9	53.8	54.7	51.0	53.7	47.1

with 2 children	34.3	36.2	34.9	38.6	34.5	39.5
with 3 children and more	9.8	10.0	10.4	10.4	11.8	13.4

Source: HBS, NBS (2019); \*NBS, UNICEF (2020a)

*(iii) Percentage of the population from 0 to 18*

The number of children is steadily declining. On January 1, 2020, the number of children in the Republic of Moldova was 573,300 children or every fifth person is up to 18 years old (Table 4).

Table 4. *Percentage of the population aged 0-18, Republic of Moldova, 2014-2020*

	Total	Male	Female
2014	21.7	23.3	20.3
2015	21.5	23.0	20.1
2016	21.4	22.9	20.1
2017	21.7	23.2	20.2
2018	21.9	23.5	20.4
2019	21.8	23.7	20.4
2020	21.7	23.8	19.7

Source: NBS data, <http://statbank.statistica.md/>

*(iv) Percentage of population over working (retiring) age*

In Moldova, women retire at age 57 and men at age 62. From 01.01.2019 the retirement age has increased; men to 63 and women to 58 years of age. Starting from June 2017, the retirement

age has been on the rise, and is predicted to reach 63 years of age for both men and women by 2028 (Table 5).

Table 5. *Percentage of population 57/ 62 age +, Republic of Moldova, years 2014-2020*

	Total	Male (retirement age at 62 years, since 2019 at 63 years)	Female (retirement age at 57 years)
2014	18.7	12.1	24.7
2015	19.2	12.5	25.4
2016	19.7	12.8	26.1
2017	20.4	13.4	26.9
2018	21.2	14.0	27.8
2019	20.6	13.4	27.1
2020*	21.4	13.8	28.4

\*provisory data

Source: NBS data, <http://statbank.statistica.md/>

During the analysed interval 2014-2020, it shows an increase in the share of the population over working age (57/62+). There is a very large gender discrepancy: among women, every fourth being in retirement age, while among men every seventh person. In 2019, 69% of the total retired population were women. This reality is explained, in particular, by maintaining a high mortality rate of the working-age population, with a high gender gap, men being more affected (Pahomii, 2018).

Even if it ranks among the countries with a relatively young population, the median age of the population being 38.8 years (NBS, 2020), the Republic of Moldova is ageing faster compared to most European countries. Compared to the economically developed countries where population ageing is due to a significant increase in life expectancy at older age, in the

Republic of Moldova, this phenomenon is the result of low birth rate and the percentage redistribution of the three large age groups (children, adults and elderly) in total population, while the reduction in mortality and increase in life expectancy have little effect. Furthermore, the driving force behind this trend is the massive emigration of people of working age. Excessive mortality of working age men (in the age group 40-60 years) and their higher rate of migration causes significant gaps in the dynamics of the elderly population by gender, with women prevailing, which is a feature of the population ageing process in the Republic of Moldova.

(v) *Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities*

In the Republic of Moldova, as reflected in the 2014 Census, 75.1% of the population declared themselves Moldovans, 7.0% - Romanians, Ukrainians - 6.6%, Gagauzians - 4.6%, Russians - 4.1%, Bulgarians - 1.9%, Roma - 0.3%, and other ethnic groups constitute 0.5% of the population. The main changes, compared to the previous Census (2004), refer to the share of the population that identifies Romanians increased by 4.8% compared to 2004. In addition, the share of the population that identifies Russian and Ukrainian ethnicity decreased by 1.9 and 1.8 pp, respectively in the last 10 years, and the Bulgarian, Gagauz and the Roma ethnic groups have not undergone essential changes. Recent studies on the topic of interethnic relations in the Republic of Moldova converge on two main ideas. In the opinion of many authors, there is a high level of peaceful coexistence and tolerance of all ethnic segments in Moldova; there has not been any potential for interethnic conflict (Petruți D., 2014).

Vulnerable groups:

- Low-income population. In particular, those who fall into the first two quintiles by income, whose average monthly disposable income is below the subsistence minimum: 63% of the subsistence minimum for the first quintile and 86% - for the second quintile. Thus, about 40% of the population in Moldova lives at an income level lower than the average subsistence minimum (HBS, NBS, 2010-2018).
- Children. In 2015, the poverty rate for children was 11.5%, while that for the general population - 9.6%. This includes 0.2% of children who are exposed to extreme poverty. The poverty rate for rural children is nine times higher than the poverty rate for urban children (NBS, UNICEF, 2018).
- Families with children in the risk situation. Family couples with children, single parents with children and other households with children have, on average, the lowest incomes. The average monthly disposable income for these three categories of the population hardly covers between 92-100% of the average subsistence minimum in the

country (NBS, UNICEF, 2018). The situation is even more dramatic for the same categories of population in rural areas.

- People with disabilities face various barriers in achieving the right to live independently in the community. Empirical studies show that among people with disabilities, only 32% are considered fully integrated into society. Among the most important causes of social isolation and inequity, people with disabilities mention poverty and low living standards (40%), lack of community services (29%), low social benefits (23%), poor health (20%), the fact that they have no friends or support network (18%), and the negative attitude of community members towards people with disabilities (10%). People with disabilities are the most dependent on social payments, and for many of them, social payments are the only source of income. This issue is fuelled by the persistence of negative stereotypes and prejudices towards people with disabilities in society and the fact that there are no comprehensive awareness-raising programs on the rights of people with disabilities (MHLSP, 2017).

- The elderly have a higher degree of dependence on social payments, these being the only source of income for a large part of retirees. Of the total number of retirees registered, about two-thirds are women. Women receive lower old-age pensions than men. The average size of the old-age pension in the agricultural sector covers only 78.0% of the subsistence minimum for pensioners, with a small gender discrepancy to the detriment of women. In the non-agricultural sector, the average pension size for men exceeds the subsistence level by 26.0%, while for women it covers only 93.0% (NBS, 2020a). Of the total number of families receiving social assistance in the period 2009-2018, over 55% have at least one person over retirement age. At the same time, about 73% of the total number of social assistance applicants are women (MHLSP, 2018).

- NEET Youth (not in education, employment, or training). A large number of youths are unemployed, and do not follow a form of training or vocational training. According to the latest labour market statistics (2018), about 24% of young people aged 15-29 are in the NEET youth category, thus increasing their vulnerability to social exclusion. Youth from rural areas and those aged 25-29 (practically every second young person of this age) remain most vulnerable (Crîșmaru, Gagauz, & Buciuceanu-Vrabie, 2017). At the same time, there is a major gender discrepancy of the NEET indicator: 35.5% for women and 19.4% for men (NBS, 2019), including a large number of young women with inactive status due to family responsibilities, in particular raising and caring for children, but also as a result of gender inequality in the internal labour market based on traditional stereotypes.

- Households with the Roma population have an increased dependence on social benefits. The income from social payment is 13% of the total income of this category of the population (GovMD, UN, 2018).

*(vi) Migration patterns (includes immigration and emigration statistics)*

The Republic of Moldova has entered the international migration circuit since its independence in 1991. International migration flows have intensified continuously and at present, the Republic of Moldova is considered the most affected country by migration in Europe. The current data on long-term migration are presented in Table 6. Thus, we observe that the annual flows of emigrants are significantly higher than the flows of immigrants, and the net migration is negative.

Table 6. *International migration in the Republic of Moldova, from 2014-2018 (number of people)*

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
emigrants	123379	126893	153184	159118	158142
immigrants	98709	105600	107242	109710	116385
net migration	-24670	-21293	-45942	-49408	-41757

Source: National Statistical Bureau data based on border crossing data

Regarding the characteristics of migrants, we can mention that in recent years there has been an increase in emigration at all ages, but more so at young ages; 20-29 and 30-39 (Table 7). The sex ratio is 53% men compared to 47% women in 2014, and 57% men compared to 43% women in 2017, so the gap between the share of migrant men and migrant women is growing in recent years (NBS, 2021)

Table 7. *Emigrants by age groups from the Republic of Moldova, 2014-2017*

Age groups	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Distribution of the emigrants by age (%), 2018
0-19	31053	30952	33097	32620	36295	23.0
20-29	34801	33801	40837	41044	37921	24.0
30-39	24161	26036	33659	36144	35178	22.2
40-49	15558	16701	22296	24001	23281	14.7
50-59	11327	11821	14104	15149	14898	9.4
60-69	4554	5478	6850	7702	7849	5.0
70+	1925	2104	2341	2458	2720	1.7

Source: National Statistical Bureau (NBS) data based on border crossing data, <http://statbank.statistica.md/>

At the same time, we mention that the net migration has remained negative during the last 25 years, which increased the drop in the population over the period 1989-2016 by 600-700 thousand people (Tabac & Gagauz, 2020), which constitutes about 20% of the total population. The demographic decline in Moldova is a consequence of declining birth rates and massive emigration rates (Gagauz, O. coord., 2016). Remittances accounted for one-third of Moldova's GDP in 2006 (being among the highest share in the world) and remain in the top among Europe & Central Asia countries in 2019 with 16% (WB Data, 2021).

**'Parent drain'** is a major feature of family life in Moldova. According to the national statistics, 24% of children in Moldova have at least one parent living abroad as a labour migrant (NBS, UNICEF, 2018). More than 35 thousand Moldovan children have both parents abroad (UNICEF Moldova, 2018a). Children from rural areas are more likely to live without one or both parents due to emigration. Children left behind are usually cared for by their grandparents, extended family members, or in some cases, by themselves. While the transfer of remittances may provide better living conditions for the children left behind, the absence of parents is emotionally challenging, and may lead to a lack of care and an increased likelihood of risky behaviour.

## 15.2 Trends and issues related to family structure, parental roles, and children's living arrangements

### (i) Family household types

During the years, some changes in the structure of households can be observed: there has been an increase in the share of single-person households and a decrease in the share of other households, including those with or without children (Table 8).

Table 8. *Structure of households by type of households, Republic of Moldova, 2014-2019, %*

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Single person	25.5	27.4	28.3	28.9	33.6	30.9
Couple without children	22.1	21.7	21.8	24.1	21.8	22.3
Couple with children	17.4	18.9	18.2	18.0	18.1	17.8
Single parent with children	2.3	1.9	2.5	2.1	2.3	2.4
Other households with children	15.5	13.0	12.5	12.4	11.5	11.3
Other households without children	17.2	17.0	16.7	14.6	12.8	15.3

Source: NBS data, <http://statbank.statistica.md>

According to the latest data (2019), in the total households with children aged up to 18, two-thirds are family couples and almost every third is a household with several family nuclei (other households).

Among the most obvious changes compared to 2014, there has been an increase in the share of family couples with children, and a decrease in the share of other households with children (with several family nuclei).

Table 9. *Distribution of households with children aged up to 18, by type of family household, Republic of Moldova, 2014-2019*

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019*
Total households with children	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>from which:</i>						
Family couple with children	47.0	52.8	50.9	52.0	52.4	63.3
Single parent with children	6.4	5.2	7.0	6.2	6.9	7.6
Other households with children	46.6	42.0	42.1	41.8	40.7	29.1

Source: HBS, NBS (2020); \*NBS, UNICEF (2020a)

In the structure of family households by the number of children (Table 10) has decreased the other households (several family nuclei) with children, more significantly those with one child (from 30.3% in 2014 to 17.2% in the total households with children in 2019). This could be explained by a cumulative result of the internal migration of the population from rural to urban areas, of the family reintegration of Moldavian emigrants in the host country, and the general decreasing population.

On the other hand, there has been an increase in the share of family couples with children; including one, two, three or more children; which is generally explained by the entry into the reproductive age of the large generations of women, born until the beginning of the 90s, and the realization of their reproductive intentions.

Table 10. *Distribution of households with children aged 18 by type of family household and number of children, Republic of Moldova, 2014-2019, %*

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019*
Total households with children	100	100	100	100	100	100

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019*
<i>from which:</i>						
Family couple with one child	21.4	22.4	21.6	19.6	23.0	25.1
Family couple with two children	19.4	23.8	22.2	25.4	22.0	28.7
Family couple with three and more children	6.2	6.6	7.0	7.0	7.4	9.4
Single parent with one child	4.2	4.0	5.0	4.3	4.5	4.8
Single parent with two children	1.7	0.8	1.3	1.4	1.8	1.7
Single parent with three and more children	0.5	0.4	0.7	0.5	0.7	1.0
Other households with one child	30.3	27.5	28.1	27.1	26.3	17.2
Other households with two children	13.1	11.6	11.3	11.8	10.7	9.0
Other households with three and more children	3.2	2.9	2.8	2.9	3.6	3.0

Source: NBS data, <http://statbank.statistica.md>; \*NBS, UNICEF (2020a)

Two out of three children (63%) live with both biological parents (UNICEF, 2018).

*(ii) Marriage and divorce rates*

In the Republic of Moldova, the family continues to be an essential element in a person's life, with official marriage still a means of establishing a family, and consensual union not being as widespread as in other European states.

The evolution of the total marriage rate shows a decreasing trend in the number of marriages (Table 11). Thus, for the period 2014-2019, it ranged from a maximum of nine marriages per 1,000 inhabitants to a minimum value in this period, of 7.5 marriages in 2018.

At the same time, the total divorce rate followed by a sharp decline from 3.9 in 2015, to 3.4 divorces per 1000 inhabitants in 2017. However, by 2019, the divorce rate had risen to 4‰.

Table 11. *The divorce rate and the marriage rate, Republic of Moldova, 2014-2019*

Year	Total marriage rate, ‰	Total divorce rate, ‰
2014	9	3.9
2015	8.7	4
2016	7.8	3.8
2017	7.6	3.4
2018	7.5	4
2019	7.6	4

Source: NBS data, <http://statbank.statistica.md/>

### *(iii) Lone-parent families*

In 2019, lone-parent families accounted for 7.6% of all households with children. In urban areas, the share of single-parent households was 4.8 percentage points higher compared to rural areas (respectively 10.3% compared to 5.5%). In the total of lone-parent families, 64% are families with one child, 22.7% with two children, and 13.3% with three and more children. Compared to 2014, the share of single-parent families is increasing (NBS, 2020b). At the last census (2014), in the registered lone-parent family almost two-thirds are concentrated in the rural areas (NBS, 2017).

### *(iv) New family forms such as same-sex couple households*

In the Republic of Moldova, same-sex marriage, respectively a same-sex couple of households is not recognized. Statistics on same-sex couples do not exist.

### *(v) Family structures and changes across social groups*

In both urban and rural areas, the share of households with children under the age of 18 in the total number of households was on average 35% in 2014, without essential discrepancies between areas, but during the years with the general observed tendency of decreasing of the share of households with children (Table 12). So, in 2019 (last available data) in the rural areas the share of households with children was slightly smaller (29.5%) than its urban counterpart (34.7%). This can be explained by the intensity of migration flows from villages, especially of the youth and adult population in the economically active age, looking for a job and a better standard of living.

Table 12. *Distribution of households by type of household and by area of residence, Republic of Moldova, 2014-2019*

	2014	2019
Urban area - Share of households with children aged up to 18 in the total households	35.1	34.7
<i>of which, %</i>	100	100
with one child	61	60.1
with two children	32.7	33.9
with three children and more	6.3	6.1
Rural area - Share of households with children aged up to 18 in total households	35.3	29.5
<i>of which, %</i>	100	100
with one child	50.2	48
with two children	37	35
with three children and more	12.8	16.9

Source: HBS, NBS (2020); NBS, UNICEF (2020a)

Households with many children are more characteristic in the rural environment. Of the total households with three and more children, almost 76% are concentrated in the rural area (NBS, UNICEF, 2020a).

*(vi) Children and young people living in (institutionalized) institutions*

Since 2006, the childcare and protection response has been actively undergoing a reform process with the engagement of the Government of Moldova (GovMD), UNICEF, key donors, universities, and many non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Between 2010 and 2012, 20 residential institutions were closed and the number of children in such care was reduced by 54% (MLSPF, 2014). As of January 2014, Moldova had 43 residential institutions with 3909 children in care (Government Decision no.434, 2014). In 2018, the number of children in residential institutions decreased twice and constituted 1484 children (NBS, UNICEF, 2018), but in 2019 – 961 children (Table 13).

Table 13. Residential placement services, the situation at the end of 2019

Total children placed in residential placement services, <i>including:</i>	<b>961</b>
Children placed in community homes	57
Children placed in foster care	558
Children placed in other residential institutions	346

Source: NBS, UNICEF (2020).

Of the children placed in residential placement services (2019), about 52% are boys; 64% are from rural areas; a quarter comprises children with disabilities; over 55% are 7-15 years old; and 25% are 16-17 years of age (NBS, UNICEF, 2020).

According to the Minimum Quality Standards for the care, education, and socialization of children in residential institutions: “Children receive residential care only after all efforts have been made and all family-type alternatives have been exhausted. Institutional placement is the last option for child protection”. Residential social institutions provide protection,

accommodation, supervision, food, care, and recovery activities for the accommodated beneficiaries (NBS, UNICEF, 2020).

Since 2006, the situation of children in residential institutions has been assessed to determine whether they can return to either their biological parents or a family of professional parental assistants. The areas where these children came from were subsequently advised and supported to develop relevant services, and the children and families were prepared for the reintegration of the children.

*(vii) Children in home care, such as maternal care, home support*

Regarding alternative childcare, the Republic of Moldova has relatively well-developed policies and a normative framework. Child protection services have been largely decentralized to the Regional Social Assistance and Family Protection Departments, and family- and community-based alternatives have been developed. In the Strategy for Child Protection, 2014-2020 (Government Decision no.434, 2014) are highlighted: significant increases in the number of children placed in professional parental assistance (PPA or foster care) and family-type children's homes (FTCH); increases in the number of cases being reviewed by Child Welfare Committees (CWC) (gatekeeping commissions); and increasing public spending in social protection.

To prevent the separation of the child from the family and their deinstitutionalization, by Government Decision no. 7 of January 20, 2016, the Commission for the protection of children in difficulty was created.

During the years 2010-2019, the continuous increase in the number of assistants Professional Parental Assistance is maintained. In 2019, their number increased by about four times compared to 2010, parallel to the increase of beneficiaries in that period by 5.5 times (Table 14). At the end of 2019, 785 children were integrated into professional parental assistance.

During the years 2010-2019, the number of *Family-type Children's Homes* decreased from 78 units that were active in 2010, to 55 family-type orphanages in 2019. The latest data (2019) attests 250 children placed in a family-type children's home.

In 2019, 3099 children were integrated into the guardianship/curatorship service.

Table 14. *Family placement services and other specialized services provided to disadvantaged children*

	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<i>Professional parental assistance</i>						
Number of assistants	105	370	375	376	398	414
Number of beneficiaries of assistance	142	645	701	810	757	785
<i>Family type children's home (FTCH)</i>						
Number of family-type orphanages	78	78	69	65	60	55
Number of children placed in FTCH	298	336	306	277	266	250
<i>Maternal centre (mother-child)</i>						
Number of maternity centres	6	11	-	10	10	-
Number of beneficiaries of assistance	256	170	-	142	150	107
<i>Adoption and guardianship</i>						
Number of adopters, citizens of the Republic of Moldova		228	279	302	21	-
Number of adopted children	208	98	116	123	97	-
National adoption	-	88	105	107	88	-
International adoption	-	10	11	16	9	-
Guardianship / trusteeship	1512	1368	-	3114	3185	3099

Source: MHLSP, 2018; NBS, UNICEF, 2020

Depending on the type of specialized social service addressed to families and children at risk, they can provide services for the development of cognitive, communication and behavioural skills; recovery/rehabilitation services; support for educational inclusion; counselling family members/caregivers; leisure activities; food; professional orientation; daily transportation; home recovery services (as appropriate) etc.

### 15.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and well-being

#### (i) Poverty rates

Despite a decline in poverty, the Republic of Moldova remains one of the poorest countries in Europe. Recent NBS and World Bank estimates (BNS, 2020), according to a new methodology and adjusted to the number of residents, showed that for 2014-2019 the poverty rates constituted 29.6-25.2%, while in the rural area the poverty rate exceeds 34%.

Table 15. *Absolute national poverty rate, Republic of Moldova, 2014-2019*

Years	%
2014	29.5
2015	25.4
2016	26.4
2017	27.7
2018	23.0
2019	25.2

Source: NBS data (BNS, 2020)

The analysis of the well-being of the population in terms of living conditions, access to education, health services, and access to various utilities shows that social and economic shortage is at a very high level (over 38% of the country's population). Moldova is still a significant rural population with more than 60% of children under the age of 14 living outside of

urban areas. The latest available data towards children poverty attests that 24% of Moldovan children live under the poverty line (BNS, 2020). Eight in ten poor families with children live in rural areas. The risk to be poor for children from villages is three times higher compared to children from urban areas (BNS, 2020).

*(ii) Employment / unemployment rates*

Although the working age population is maintained at a relatively high level because of the "demographic dividend" stage, the population's occupation rate in Moldova is maintained at a low level. By 2018, the employment rate has fluctuated with insignificant growth, from 43.8% to 44.5%, followed by a decreasing trend. In 2019, the employment rate of the population aged 15 and over was 40.1%. The employment rate of men (44.2%) was higher compared to that of women (36.5%).

In the distribution by residence areas, this indicator had values of 47.0% in urban areas and 35.6% in rural areas. The employment rate of the working age population (16-58 years for women and 16-63 years for men) was 49.8%. In the category aged 15-29, this indicator recorded a value of 30.9%.

Table 16. *Employment/unemployment rate, Republic of Moldova, 2014-2019*

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Employment rate (%)						
Total	43.8	42.4	43.0	42.4	44.5	40.1
Male	49.9	45.3	46.1	46.1	48.1	44.2
Women	38.8	39.8	40.2	39.1	41.4	36.5
Urban		43.8	43.8	43.3	43.0	47.0
Rural		41.4	42.4	41.7	45.5	35.6
Unemployment rate (%)						
Total	2.8	4.7	4.0	3.9	2.9	5.1

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Male	3.6	5.9	5.2	4.5	3.4	5.8
Women	2.0	3.4	2.7	3.2	2.4	4.4
Urban		6.5	6.0	5.8	4.7	4.9
Rural		3.4	2.5	2.5	1.8	5.3

Source: NBS data, <http://statbank.statistica.md/>

The unemployment rate (according to the definition of the International Labour Office (ILO)) at the country level was 5.1% in 2019; the highest value registered in the last six years. Unemployment affected men to a greater extent - 58.8% of the total unemployed and people in rural areas - 55.5%.

The unemployment rate for men was 5.8%, for women - 4.4%, in urban areas - 4.9% and in rural areas - 5.3%. By age, the highest rate, 10.4%, was recorded among young people aged 15-24.

It should be noted that officially registered unemployment is too low, and does not reflect the real situation. The recent economic, social, and political crisis, the intensive migration of young people seeking work, especially from rural areas, as well as the reliability of population statistics (data collection on migration), allow us to assume that the unemployment rate is underestimated.

*(iii) Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage related to gender, age, ethnicity, migrant status and other social dimensions*

In the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (2030) and the strategy for medium-term development "Moldova-2020", the Government of the Republic Moldova is committed to efforts to ensure inclusive and sustainable development, to integrate issues related to population dynamics, reproductive health, and gender relations into national strategies and programs, thus in the medium and long term, ensuring the country's competitiveness. Despite the decline in the poverty rate in recent years, the level of income in The Republic of Moldova remains the lowest compared to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (GovMD, UN, 2018).

In the Republic of Moldova, economic growth in recent years has been manifested by the deterioration of employment quality.

*Migrant status.* Returned migrants from abroad face various challenges concerning reintegration into the national labour market. During 2016, because of the active measures applied, only 33% of returned migrants registered with the National Agency for Employment were employed. Unattractive salaries, insufficient jobs to match skills and competencies acquired abroad, lack of recognition of non-formal and informal learning, hostile investment environment, and insufficient resources and knowledge to start a business are determinants of a repeated migration (Un Moldova, GovMD, 2017).

*Low-educated and/or poorly informed population about their rights.* This is particularly the case for the Roma ethnicity, which faces a low level of education compared to the rest of the population, and a lack of training and qualifications. Thus, the lack of professional qualification determines the Roma to work in low-income positions or to carry out activities on their own. Other problems that expose the Roma population to indecent working conditions are related to the lack of legal culture, the geographical isolation of inhabited communities, compactness of Roma, barriers to communication and interaction between Roma communities, and official institutions, as well as ignorance of the opportunities offered by the National Agency for Employment.

*Gender discrepancies.* There are limited possibilities for women's participation in the labour market due to a lack of educational services for young children (aged 2-3), discrimination based on sex and age at employment, discrepancies between women's and men's salaries (women's salary compared to men's salary was 87.6%), etc. Women are traditionally less present in management positions (Gagauz, O. coord., 2016). Men are more exposed to informal employment compared to women. Even more exposed are men from rural areas: over half of men employed in the labour market work informally (57%) (GovMD, UN, 2018).

*People with disabilities* are exposed to indecent working conditions due to the low level of education, including as a consequence of institutionalization, ignorance of rights (e.g., misinformation about the loss of disability allowance/pension with official employment), as well as low level of motivation (people with disabilities are long-term beneficiaries of social benefits, being poorly motivated to get involved and seek professional development).

*The elderly population* is engaged in agriculture. The share of people in the age involved in agriculture is growing. About 69% of people aged 65 and over who are employed are active in agriculture. The rate of informality in agriculture is high, limiting access to the pension system and other benefits for agricultural workers (GovMD, UN, 2018).

Rural population. The most vulnerable category of the population is rural, for at least two reasons: (i) due to limited economic opportunities and low employment rates in villages, which increases the chances of informal, low-paid and/or insecure employment, and (ii) due to strong exposure to the agricultural sector (56% of the employed population), where most informal employment is concentrated. At the same time, the share of informal employment in total employment in rural areas is much higher than in urban areas: 53% compared to only 13% in cities.

*(iv) Patterns of education disadvantage*

According to the PISA 2018 evaluation results, the Republic of Moldova is one of the 16 countries that managed to not decrease the performance of the average scores reached in any of the evaluated areas, compared to the previous editions of PISA. At the same time, Moldova is one of the seven countries that has registered an increase in results in each field and each participation cycle. However, the average score recorded by the Republic of Moldova in all PISA cycles remains lower than the average score of the countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (MECC, 2019). Among the disadvantages of education in the Republic of Moldova is the fact that the school in the Republic of Moldova focuses on information and not on skills training.

The quality of human capital is in decline due to the migration of skilled labour. The increase of the unskilled labour force share "sentences" the national economy towards the production of goods with low added value. Low wages compared to those of other states in the region or the EU and the unskilled labour force contribute to the development in the Republic of Moldova of industries that operate under Lohn systems. Although it ensures multiple benefits, in the long term this trend represents a risk for the national economy, transforming it into an annex of the big economies, thus preventing the consolidation of an efficient and competitive economy.

*(v) Major trends in social assistance, such as risk groups, levels of receiving social benefits*

At present, the socio-economic situation in the Republic of Moldova is characterized by instability, high dependence on internal and external shocks, the country's revenues being classified as "small to medium" (UNICEF & MHLSP, 2014). During the independence period, the country failed to achieve significant socio-economic progress and increase the standard of living of the population, which is an important factor for population migration, especially for young people looking for a job or to settle permanently in countries with higher living standards.

Significant discrepancies are recorded in the territorial socio-economic development. Most of the business is concentrated in the Chisinau municipality. Poor business development

in the regions, especially in the rural area, has become a major constraint for their socio-economic development.

A particular problem is the access of the population to infrastructure. Despite the implementation of some programs, the quality of the transport infrastructure remains very poor; the public investments being often inefficient, so even large programs do not lead to a significant improvement of the situation (MHLSP, 2018).

Economic and social transformations that have taken place in the Republic of Moldova have affected the standard of living of families with children, and have contributed to increasing the demand for social assistance aimed at supporting them. The impact of phenomena such as poverty, illegal migration, and insufficient investment in social protection has had a negative impact on the ability of families to raise and care for their children. Social services are oriented towards the modernization and diversification of community and family services to combat poverty and social exclusion, prevent the institutionalization of the child, increase the quality of family life, and encourage birth rates. The mechanism for granting family benefits has also been modified by applying the mechanism for assessing family needs. The income testing mechanisms are applied for three types of social benefits (MHLSP, 2018): social assistance, aid for the cold period of the year, and material aid from the Republican Fund for Social Support of the Population. At the same time, this system is redistributive and non-contributory; the budget is formed depending on the needs and financial possibilities of the state now.

#### *(vi) Housing problems*

The Republic of Moldova has a comprehensive legislative base for transitioning to a market economy. Several laws and regulations were adopted in recent years including the Law on Housing (2014), the Law on Energy Performance of Buildings (2014), the Law on Insolvency (2012), the Law on Condominiums (2000), the Law on Real Estate Cadastre (1998), etc. (UN Moldova, 2015).

The Republic of Moldova has a relatively new housing stock but its general condition is very poor. The existing housing stock lacks maintenance and capital repairs. Most of the housing stock (67%) is individual housing, but this ratio differs in Chisinau and Balti, where multi-family housing amounts to 63% and 62% of the total, respectively. With new housing developments, the trend is towards smaller apartments with one and two rooms in multi-apartment buildings. Housing in the Republic of Moldova is characterized by low access to water and sanitation. In 2012, about 1.5 million people were served by the public water supply system. This represented 42.1% of the population (68.9% urban and 22.7% rural) (UN Moldova, 2015).

*Summary: The broader socio-economic context and trends which influences children's, parental and family circumstances and environments*

At present, the socio-economic situation in the Republic of Moldova is characterized by instability and high dependence on internal and external shocks; the country's revenues being classified as "small to medium" (WB, 2020). In the years 2016-2018, the economic growth is maintained at around 4% (Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure, 2019), this level being very low, both concerning historical developments and in the perspective of reaching an economic level of development like those of EU countries.

A full one-quarter of Moldova's economically active population is working outside of the country. Poverty and migration contribute to the disintegration of the family structure and the numbers of children left without parental care. 24% of children have at least one parent working abroad (NBS, UNICEF, 2018) and 5% have both parents abroad (UNICEF & MHLSP, 2014). Parents from rural areas are more likely to leave their children behind than those from urban areas, and most children left without parental care are 10 years or older and left in the care of close relatives (UNICEF Moldova, 2018a).

Children in Moldova can face multiple, interrelated vulnerabilities including those related to poverty, violence, neglect, lack of access to education, healthcare and other services, as well as being without adequate parental care as can be the case with children left behind by migrating parents. Those children with both parents out of the country should be considered "without parental care" and requiring special attention from the child protection system to ensure their rights are protected.

#### **15.4 National public policy guidelines, frameworks, institutions and actors that influence the objectives, content and provide family support policies**

##### *(i) Membership to the EU*

NO. The Republic of Moldova is NOT a member country of the EU.

The European Parliament passed a resolution in 2014 stating that "following Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union, Moldova (and other countries), as well as any other European country, have a European perspective and can apply for EU membership in compliance with the principles of democracy, respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights, minority rights and ensuring the rule of rights".

##### *(ii) Relationship with the European Union*

The Association Agreement, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, provides

for stronger political association and economic integration between the EU and the Republic of Moldova, and has created constantly growing trade between the partners since 2014 (EU & GovMD, 2013). The EU's assistance has delivered tangible and visible benefits to Moldovan citizens.

Relations between Moldova and the European Union (EU) are currently shaped via the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), an EU foreign policy instrument dealing with countries bordering its member states. Moldova has strong ties to EU member state Romania. During the interwar period, Moldova and Romania were united as a single country. They share a common language, traditions, and culture. The EU is developing an increasingly close relationship with Moldova, going beyond cooperation, to gradual economic integration and a deepening of political cooperation.

Moldova has a distinct chapter on child rights in its association agreement with the European Union, signed in 2014, to further ensure that government-led reforms incorporate protection and promotion of the rights of all children.

*(iii) Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy*

The most important political actor in the development and promotion of family policies in the Republic of Moldova is the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection. However, it mainly promotes measures to support the family economically and financially (allowances, child allowances), but the measures related to reconciling family and professional life, the development of family services, care services, and supervision of children are quite modest. Existing family policies are more focused on categories of beneficiaries than on an integrated approach aimed at the family institution. At the same time, many applied measures (e.g. social assistance) are carried out more after the confirmation of the poverty status than to prevent it based on risk. The impact of family policies also depends on how it harmonizes with other sectoral policies; demographic policies, health policies, employment policies, migration policies, and fiscal policies; but in the Republic of Moldova family policy is not based on direct correlation with these areas.

*(iv) Influential lobbying groups*

UNICEF, UNFPA, UNIFEM, Expert Group, and Centre Partnership for Development are influential lobby groups. Following the analysis and arguments invoked by UNFPA Moldova, Expert-Group and the Centre Partnership for Development, the authorities were influenced to resort to the implementation of the reform of childcare leave (paid and unpaid leave), and the introduction of parental leave. To note, Expert-Group is an analytical centre (think-tank), the

mission of which is to empower citizens, businesses, the media, and the public authorities to actively contribute to the sustainable and inclusive development of the country through independent analysis and consultancy, evidence-based policies, and community mobilization (Expert-Grup, 2021). Centre Partnership for Development is a non-governmental structure that advocates for the implementation of the concept of gender equality in all areas of life, promoting public policies in the field, addressing issues related to the role of women in society and empowering it, eliminating all forms of discrimination, documentation, information and training centre for profile NGOs and initiative groups (Center Partnership for Development, 2021).

In 2020, the UN Population Fund - with the support of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) - had launched the project "More opportunities: Gender-sensitive family policies for the private sector in the Western Balkans and Moldova". By various activities and training private companies are guided on how to implement family-friendly workplace policies.

The main implementation partners of the Strategy for child protection are in particular NGOs: Partnerships for Every Child; Lumos Foundation; CCF Moldova - Child, Community, Family; National Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse, Terre des Hommes.

*(v) Influential policy/research networks*

*Networks:*

- *The National Agency for Research and Development (ANCD)* has the mission to ensure excellence and performance in achieving national priorities in the fields of research, innovation, and development (ANCD, 2020). Policies to reconcile work and family life are a priority for the agency.
- *The Alliance of Active NGOs in the field of Child and Family Social Protection (APSCF)* is an NGO network on a mission to create a coherent and functional development framework of the decision-makers and the implementation mechanisms and practices while securing the respect and real protection of children and families (APSCF, 2020).
- *Youth Friendly Health Centres (YFHC) network* - through the services it provides (information, counselling, integrated medical services with psychosocial assistance) and the range of specialists who activate (psychologists, social workers, gynaecologists, urologists, dermatologists, HIV/AIDS counsellors), the YFHC network promotes the healthy way of life among the younger generation. Currently, 41 Youth Friendly Health Centres are joined in the National Youth Clinic (YC) network (YC, 2020).

- *The National Network of Local Youth Councils of Moldova (NNLYCM)*. Created in 2016 as a participatory platform of the Local Youth Councils (LYC), the activity of the NNLYCM in collaboration with the MECR relates to the specific objectives of NSDYS 2020 and focuses on the creation, assistance, and consolidation of the LYC to be actively involved in the decision-making process at the local and regional level in community development. The number of LYCs of the Network count 25 by 2020 (NNLYCM, 2020).
- *The National Youth Council of Moldova (NYCM)* presents itself as a unique national platform of the youth association sector, and incorporates into its structure 61 local and national youth organizations (NYCM, 2020).

*Influential policy:*

- The government adopted the National Strategic Program in the field of demographic security of the Republic of Moldova (2011-2025), where the promotion of family policies and those encouraging the birth rate are mentioned as paramount.
- The Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection has the function of elaborating family support policy documents.
- The National Commission for Population and Development manages demographic priorities and risks for the Republic of Moldova, develops and promotes state policies in the field of population development and demographic risk prevention, makes proposals for cross-sectoral strategies, monitors demographic trends and their correlation with the country's socio-economic programs.

*(vi) The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support (not more than 10 lines)*

In the Republic of Moldova, the political system is democratic and, respectively, the state guarantees its non-interference in the exercise of reproductive rights of the person. Currently, family policies in the Republic of Moldova are based mainly on money transfers (various allowances) and less on services for families.

The central authorities of the Republic of Moldova, for the most part, promote amelioration policies, which aim to improve the living conditions of the family (allowances, family allowances, etc.). To a lesser extent, remedial policies are promoted, which consist of educating family life and providing information on family problems (family counselling and family therapy services), and *family-friendly policies* (family support services - care and/or supervision of children or dependents, provision of household services at home) oriented to promote gender

equality and reconciliation of parental and professional roles, life-work balance (UNFPA Moldova, 2020). Family policies largely depend on the economic situation of the country. Given that this is precarious, the family policy measures implemented are modest.

*(vii) The democratic system and main political parties; unitary vs federal state structures (centralised vs decentralised structures)*

According to the supreme law of the state, the Republic of Moldova is a sovereign and independent state, which is unitary and indivisible. The form of government of the state is the republic. It is a rule of law, democratic, in which human dignity, rights and freedoms, the free development of the human personality, justice and political pluralism are supreme values and are guaranteed (Monitorul Oficial, 2016). The public administration in the administrative-territorial units is based on the principles of local autonomy, of the decentralization of the public services, of the eligibility of the local public administration authorities and the consultation of the citizens in the local issues of special interest (Monitorul Oficial, 2016). The Republic of Moldova is a multi-party republic with a unicameral system. To date, in Moldova, 45 parties have been formally registered. Current parties in parliament: Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova, ACUM (DA and PAS), Democratic Party of Moldova, Pro Moldova, Șor Party, Independents (Ministry of Justice, 2020).

*(viii) The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular (e.g. Ministry roles, national vs local/regional government roles)*

Central public authorities involved in the provision of social services include the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection (MHLSP) and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MECR), among which the MHLSP is the central specialized body of public administration responsible for developing, promoting, and implementing national policy and programs in the field of social assistance as well as fulfilling the main functions in the process of providing social services at the national level. For the correct and unitary implementation of the normative framework - the National Social Assistance Agency was established under the MSMPS. The functions of providing social services in the administrative-territorial units of the second level are attributed to the territorial structures of social assistance, whose direct responsibility involves diversifying and providing social services aimed at maintaining the beneficiary in the family and community where they come from.

The direct activity of providing social services at the first level is carried out by the social assistance unit through social workers, selected and employed following the legislation, in collaboration with other existing services at the community level.

(ix) *The ways in, and the degree to which, professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policymaking and reviews*

Community participation in policy development and review is established by law (Monitorul Oficial, 2008). The main stages of ensuring the transparency of the decision-making process are: a) informing the public regarding the initiation of the elaboration of the decision; b) making available to the interested parties the draft decision and its related materials; c) consulting the citizens, the associations established by the law, other interested parties; d) examination of the recommendations of the citizens, of the associations established by the law, of other interested parties in the process of elaboration of the draft decisions; e) informing the public regarding the adopted decisions. Each representation of the central and local public authorities falls under the incidence of law. The consultation with the public and the civil society is done through a press release, directed information, and publication on the authority's page and online platforms; [www.particip.gov.md](http://www.particip.gov.md) and [www.actelocale.md](http://www.actelocale.md) (on the local authority level). According to the latest data available (State Chancellery, 2020), about 91% of the draft decisions and laws were consulted with citizens, civil society and development partners. In 2019, from the total number of recommendations received from citizens, public associations, trade unions, employers' associations, business representatives, development partners and other stakeholders, about 48.3% of the recommendations were accepted. At the level of the local public authorities, the Decision Transparency Indicator was about 26% in 2016 (latest data available) (Pîrvan, 2017). Based on the MHLSP reports (MHLSP, 2019) on ensuring decision-making transparency in social policies, it is shown that NGOs active in the field are informed and consulted in the process and initiatives to improve the regulatory framework in the field of activity, and relevant recommendations are taken into account in the process of drafting and finalizing the documents. However, there is no detailed disaggregation of the public consulted.

**15.5 List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year 2000. For each policy document indicate**

(a) *whether the participation of families and young people has been mentioned in the document*

- The Family Code of the Republic of Moldova (CODE No. 1316, 2000) indicates that family and family relationships in the Republic of Moldova are protected by the state (Popescu, 2014).
- Strategy for child protection (2014-2020) - is focused on three general objectives, divided into specific objectives: (1) ensuring the necessary conditions for growth and children's education in the family environment; (2) preventing and combating violence, neglect and

exploitation of children, promotion of nonviolent practices in upbringing and education children; and (3) reconciling family life with professional activity to ensure the harmonious growth and development of the child.

- The Law on Youth (No 215 from 29.07.2016) regulates the principles and goals of youth policies, based on the principles of cross-sectorial cooperation, equality, information, participation, parity and transversality; outlines the areas of state intervention in the field of youth, as well as the requirements for the stakeholders of youth policies.
- The Law on administrative decentralization (no. 435 of 28.12.2006) is mentioned, with the subsequent amendments, which indicate the own fields of activity of the Local Public Authorities (LPA), the powers of the APC delegated to level 1 and 2 LPAs, respecting the criteria of effectiveness and economic rationality, decentralized public services, rules of the administrative and financial decentralization process, other important provisions. As mentioned, most of the tasks in the field of family, child and youth policies are decentralized and delegated to LPA1 and LPA2.
- National Strategic Program in the field of demographic security of the Republic of Moldova (2011-2025) - Being a strategic document for the population with a pronounced emphasis on family issues and considering the importance for human potential of the topics addressed, one of the Program implementation conditions is the full participation of the representatives of all the socio-economic fields concerned.
- National Strategy for Youth Sector Development 2020 (GovMD, 2014a) - emphasizes the extension of existing services and creation of new services, establishing four strategic areas: (i) youth participation, (ii) youth services, (iii) economic empowerment of youth, and (iv) strengthening of the youth sector.
- Strategy to expand Youth Friendly Health Centres across the country and to integrate the provision of youth-friendly health services into the national health system.
- "Moldova 2020" National Development Strategy - ensuring qualitative economic development and, implicitly, poverty reduction.
- National development strategy "Moldova 2030" – the main issue of the strategy is increasing the quality of life for all the inhabitants. In relation to family policies, one objective is more appropriate – to ensure a work-family life balance.
- Law on Volunteering (No. 121 of 18.06.2010) regulates the areas that benefit from volunteering incentive programs, social relations and responsibilities of the participants

in the volunteering activity, the terms and conditions for volunteer participation of individuals in volunteer activities in favour of the community.

- Government Decision no. 889 of 11.11.2013 on the approval of the Framework Regulation on the organization and functioning of the Social Support Service for Families with Children (GovMD, 2013).
- Government Decision no.1034 from 31.12.2014 on the approval of the Framework Regulation of the Social home-based care and Minimum Quality Standards.
- Government Decision no.1034 of 31.12.2014 on the approval of the Framework Regulation of the Home Social Care Service and the Minimum Quality Standards (GovMD DECISION No. 1034, 2015).
- Government Decision no.722 from 22.09.2011 for the approval of the Framework Regulation on the organization and functioning of the Social Services "Mobile Team" and the minimum quality standards (GovMD, 2011).
- Government Decision no.780 of 25.09.2014 on the approval of the Minimum Quality Standards for the Social Support Service for Families with Children (GovMD, 2014).
- Law on social services (No.123 of 18.06.2010) (GovMD, 2010).
- Social Assistance Law (No. 547 of 25.12.2003) (GovMD, 2003).
- The Law on Mediation (No. 134 of 03.07.2015) (GovMD, 2015).

Based on sociological surveys, we could highlight that only 1/4 of youth consider that the vote of the citizens has a great influence on the way central public authorities work (CBS AXA, 2016). The youth have an attitude of reluctance and mistrust of the power of their involvement in decision-making (Gagauz, Stratan, Buciuceanu-Vrabie, & et.al, 2020).

Starting December 2017, a U-Report real-time social messaging tool was launched, enabling communication between young people and decision makers. It has engaged more than 20,000 users, making it the third-largest U-Report community in the ECARO region. In 2019, data from the U-Report platform attests that more than 50% of the youth respondents confirm that both national and local authorities do not take their opinion seriously and do not report on it (U-Report, 2020).

*b) The extent to which such participation has been implemented*

Over the last 10 years, in the social and family protection component, most of the achievements are due to organized social campaigns and the introduction of paternity leave. For "Social Protection, Family and Child", were two objectives that were relatively well implemented:

- specific objective - prevention of the victimization of the child. The government has reported numerous social campaigns under this objective, most of which are implemented with contributions from civil society / NGOs.
- specific objective - improved work-life balance Regarding this objective, the most notable achievement of the Government is the adoption of the law on paternity leave.

In the context of reforming the child protection system in the Republic of Moldova and aligning it with European and international standards and commitments, in recent years several important achievements regarding reforms of the child care system in difficult situations have taken place, in response to the needs of children with disabilities and other special needs by moving from highly specialized social services to specialized social services (UNICEF Moldova, 2018a).

At the same time, the implementation of child protection measures in conditions of profound demographic changes and unfavourable socio-economic situation involves the application of new forms of social services for families with children from socially disadvantaged categories to help overcome difficult situations and prevention of social marginalization and exclusion (MHLSP, 2017a).

Among the most important actions carried out on child protection are:

- ✓ Elaboration of the normative framework for the regulation of the mechanism of conditioning in the establishment and payment of social assistance for families with children at risk.
- ✓ Development of the parenting skills training programs is planned to be implemented in the field of social assistance, education, health.
- ✓ Elaboration of the normative framework for the organization and functioning of the temporary placement centres for emergency cases for child victims of violence, neglect, exploitation, and traffic.
- ✓ Reviewing the normative framework regarding the organization and functioning of services addressed to families with children, children at risk, and children separated from parents (Family type children's home (FTCH), temporary placement centre for children in a risk situation, day centre for children with disabilities, maternal centre).

- ✓ Streamlining the cooperation of professionals who interact with children, through integration into the work practices of the child and family welfare framework in the purpose of preventing risks and difficult situations in the primary stage.
- ✓ Development of skills of qualified support staff for assisting children with special educational needs (training activities).
- ✓ Development of models of early intervention services for children aged 0-3.
- ✓ Development and promotion of information and prevention materials in the field of online child safety, provided through an online platform.
- ✓ Strengthening the capacities of specialists with competences in the field of child protection and implementation of the case management mechanism for children.
- ✓ Consolidation of the capacities of the territorial structures of social assistance in providing social support service for families with children.
- ✓ Increasing access to family planning services, by increasing the level of information for adolescents and young people.

The institutional framework for the administration of social benefits includes social workers for needs assessment and payment administration offices in the territory (Avocatul Poporului. Ombudsman, 2020). Over the last years, in the Republic of Moldova in general, the functional structure of the social services system has been formed which is expressed by the following:

- the types/forms of social services provided have been extended, social services benefiting families with children are divided into primary (community) social services, specialized social services, and social services with high specialization. Primary social services and specialized social services are proactive. The basis of this classification is the level of specialization of social services;
- the institutional framework was created, the role of local public administration authorities and civil society in the organization and development of social services was significantly increased, the basis for the establishment and development of the national network of social workers was created;
- the processes of deinstitutionalization and delegation to the local public authorities of the competences for establishing asylums, community centres were initiated, simultaneously with the development of the partnership with the civil society in this respect;

- social services are organized at the community level depending on the identified needs, the number of potential beneficiaries, the complexity of difficult situations, and the degree of social risk;
- at the district level, a structure was created which was responsible for managing the issue of vulnerable groups: the social assistance and child protection department.

### **15.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services**

#### *(i) The priorities in child welfare and family policy*

Areas in which the economic instruments of the policy to support families with children are applied include:

- Family income: guaranteeing a minimum income necessary for a decent living, maintaining the purchasing power of the family's disposable income through the compensation or indexation system;
- The system of benefits in cash and in-kind: social allowances for children, maternity allowances, monthly allowances for raising and caring for children, social assistance, material aids, etc.

The legislative framework in the field of policies, with the main beneficiary being the child, identified the following common trends with the global ones: the creation of common standards of children's rights; the formation of a special mechanism for monitoring the observance of the commitments assumed by the states in this field; the functioning of international and regional organizations active in providing social assistance and ensuring the protection of children in which Moldova also participates; developing and implementing comprehensive social programs to help families with children in need; the development of a network of the Commission on the Rights of the Child (Children's Ombudsman Institute), which monitors the activities promoted in the field of child protection (Avocatul Poporului. Ombudsman, 2020); improving the training of staff - social workers, defining their role and professional characteristics as subjects of child protection; and a reform of national social protection systems for children with an emphasis on the experience of world achievements.

The current system of social services of the Republic of Moldova, developed in 2003, is achieved in conditions of balance between the three basic components of society: the individual - the child, the family, and the community. The current legislation provides for the creation of a

general framework for the organization and management of social services for families with children in situations of social risk.

*(ii) The main types of family provision and support and key features*

(e.g. different types of cash support (universal and targeted, work-family reconciliation measures and children's/family services, child care etc)

Social assistance is a component of the national social protection system designed to prevent the social risks of motherhood and childcare. Reforms in the social assistance system in recent years have had positive effects on raising the living standards of families and provide more appropriate solutions to the identified needs, with particular emphasis on the social integration of people, through measures to support families with children and the protection of mother and child:

- the amount of the single childbirth allowance increased in 2019; more than 2.6 times compared to 2015 - from 137 EUR at the birth of the first child (at the birth of each subsequent child – 350.7 EUR) to 408 EUR. Starting from 2017, the allowance was granted in the equal amount for the first child and the next child. At the same time, the amount of the single birth allowance in 2017 is established at an amount equal to the monetary value of the minimum basket of goods required at birth, calculated for the year before birth;
- in 2019, childcare and parenting monthly allowances (until the child reaches the age of 2 years) increased 1.5 times compared to 2015. So, in 2019, the average size of childcare and parenting monthly allowances was 91 EUR for insured persons (or 30% of the average salary), and only 33 EUR for uninsured persons.

Table 17. *State social allowances and allowances addressed to families with children, registered with the National Social Insurance House, Moldova, 2019*

Categories of beneficiaries	2019	
	number of beneficiaries (persons)	the average size of the benefit (EUR)
State social allowances in total		
inclusive:		
<i>for children with disabilities up to the age of 18</i>	10684	36
<i>in case of maintenance loss</i>	6091	29
Allowances for families with children:		
single childbirth allowance (beneficiaries/children), total	35531/36089	408
<i>from which:</i>		
the single allowance at the birth of the first child (beneficiaries/children)		408
the single allowance at the birth of each subsequent child (beneficiaries/children)		408
monthly allowance for raising the child until the age of three, insured persons (beneficiaries/children)	46929/49248	91
monthly allowance for childcare until the age of 1.5 / 2.0 years, uninsured persons (beneficiaries/children)	38066/39315	33
the monthly support allowance for raising to the age of 3, twin children or several children born from a single pregnancy, insured and uninsured persons.	1436/2916	16.5

Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, [www.mmpsf.gov.md](http://www.mmpsf.gov.md), [www.cnas.md](http://www.cnas.md)

To support the local public administration authorities, as well as to ensure the right to social services for disadvantaged groups, the Government — by Decision no. 800/2018 — established the minimum package of social services financed from the means of the Population Support Fund which includes the following services:

- Social monetary support service addressed to disadvantaged families/persons,
- Social support service for families with children,
- Social service Personal assistance.

The financing of the minimum package of social services is carried out in proportion to the financial means accumulated in the respective fund, and to the amount provided for the specified minimum package of social services. The Social Service "Support for families with children" (hereinafter referred to as "family support service") plays an important role in preventing and overcoming risk situations, and ensuring the upbringing and education of children in the family. The appointed service is provided in two forms: primary family support and secondary family support. Within the secondary family support, families with children can benefit from financial aid. Towards the end of 2018, the social support service for families with children was developed in all administrative-territorial units.

*Social monetary support service for disadvantaged families/persons.* To provide support measures focused on the assessed needs of disadvantaged people/families and to prevent their social exclusion and institutionalization, Government Decision no. 716/2018 *Social monetary support service addressed to disadvantaged families/persons* was organised. The monetary support is granted to the beneficiary for the repair of the house, the adaptation of the house to the needs of the disadvantaged family/person, the purchase of fuel for food preparation and heating in the cold season, the purchase of furniture adapted to needs. Individualized by the assistance. This service consists in granting a non-refundable and non-taxable amount of money that will not exceed the amount of 301 EUR, which is granted to the family/person in difficulty, through a single and/or monthly payment for a certain period, but no longer than six months to facilitate the implementation of the actions set out in the individualized assistance plan, confirmed by the results of the needs assessment.

*(iii) The types of funding involved such as state, charity vs private sector providers, and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners*

Social services are financed from:

- the state budget - to provide social services at the national level;

- the budgets of the administrative-territorial units - for the provision of social services at territorial level;
- the own sources of the social service providers from the Public Associations that operate in the sphere of social services following the statute and with the legislation in the field and other sources according to the legislation.

The social services in the minimum package of social services are financed within the means of the Population Support Fund, in the manner established by the Government. At the same time, the own incomes of social service providers (including from economic activities carried out for self-financing), donations, sponsorships or other contributions of individuals or legal entities from the country and abroad, as well as other sources, according to the legislation, can be used to finance social services.

Financial sustainability is a critical issue in childcare reform due to underestimating the cost of providing alternative care services.

*(iv) Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations*

In the Republic of Moldova, the number of programs, including educational, and services specifically focused on the family is limited. On a general level, there is an awareness of the imperative to implement a functional mechanism of family-friendly services, programs and preventive measures to reduce the vulnerability of the family and promote its well-being, but also to strengthen organizational capacities and sufficient budgetary resources through allowances and social services, safe and conducive to the upbringing and development of children.

While there are departments of psychology, sociology, or social work at the university level, family-focused programs such as family science, family psychology, or family counselling do not exist, resulting in a shortage of family specialists and practitioners.

Usually, in the implementation of a policy/program, an action plan is elaborated, with evaluation indicators, to which reference is made annually or periodically by the responsible institution. At the same time, preliminary/intermediate monitoring is carried out by invited experts, donor partners, and representatives of civil and academic society. However, several limitations are identified in the implementation process:

- it is not strict monitoring, by the central public authorities, in compliance with the deadlines assumed in government decisions and laws, thus not ensuring the full and effective implementation of the objectives;

- lack of unified cross-sectoral monitoring mechanisms;
- implementation impact assessment is sporadic;
- the lack of training programs, including continuous training for all actors in cross-sectoral cooperation mechanisms, applying a single country-wide approach to each mechanism addressed;
- deficient infrastructure for all territorial administrative units in both competent human resources and financial resources, to ensure implementation at local/regional level equally throughout the country;
- the lack of calculations by the central public authorities regarding the implementation costs for any normative or policy document, including the lack of proper budgeting of the implementation costs of the cross-sectoral mechanisms.
- the lack of a well-organized system of evidence and data collection, as well as their accuracy, at the level of each territorial administrative unit, which does not allow the evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of the implemented policies/programs.

*(v) Limitations in national and official data and statistics*

Limitations are determined by the availability of statistical data and indicators calculated for the population with usual residence; and the accessibility of complete data and information on the functioning of the family-oriented policy program of the Republic of Moldova.

The data used in the development of policies and strategies, including family-oriented, did not always ensure a sufficient detail of the analysed phenomena, including due to the disaggregation limited by gender, age, region, ethnicity, etc. This has not made it possible to identify what inequalities are and how vulnerable groups benefit from development outcomes, as well as what policy measures are needed to improve the situation of those most in need. Monitoring indicators were not always directly related to the issue addressed, and/or did not have a constant presence in public statistical works and sociological measurements.

### **15.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision**

*(i) What are the prominent policy and practice developments related to family support services from children's rights, social equality, and evidence-informed perspectives?*

Although the current socio-economic transformations in the Republic of Moldova are following the European principles of family policy, in reality, there is no strict and coherent observance of these principles. So, the measures taken in social practice do not cover all the existing problems

of the family institution. Only after 2006, with the creation of the Ministry of Social Protection, Family and Child (renamed in 2019 the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection), began to foreshadow a concept of policy on the unitary family, but which is not yet well-established and sufficiently clearly articulated.

The Republic of Moldova does not have an explicit family policy, but an *implicit* one, in the sense that it does not explicitly include officially recognized family measures or specific programs aimed at achieving precise and explicit objectives. Implicit policies also target individuals, segments of the population, certain social issues, and sectoral social policies. Depending on the extent to which family policies affect the family or living conditions, in the Republic of Moldova are largely promoted *amelioration policies* aimed to improve the living conditions of the family (allowances, family allowances, etc.). To a lesser extent are promoted *remedial policies*, that consist of educating family life and providing information on family problems (family counselling and family therapy services), and *family-friendly policies* to encourage women's economic empowerment and promote gender equality (family support services - care and/or supervision of children or dependents, provision of household services at home) (UNFPA Moldova, 2020).

(ii) *What are the gaps in the provisions/policies/action plans?*

A peculiarity of family social policies in the Republic of Moldova is that most of the time they are focused on the individual, neglecting their intentional or unintentional impact on the entire family system.

Family policies in the Republic of Moldova focus, as a matter of priority, on the areas of child protection (raising and educating children in the family, combating abuse, violence against children), supporting the family when the child appears and, secondarily, on reconciling family life with professional life and ensuring the necessary living conditions for poor families (Gagauz, O. coord., 2016).

Existing policies are more focused on categories of beneficiaries than on a targeted approach per child, and the measures applied are mostly carried out post-factum to confirm poverty rather than to prevent it on risk criteria.

Family protection measures do not highlight young families in a separate compartment; the role of family policies at the current stage in facilitating the process of adapting young families to the changing society is diminished.

In our country, issues in the field of social protection are interconnected with those in the economic field, health, labour market, education, cultural context regarding traditional gender

roles and dominant stereotypes. Discriminatory gender norms persist in the Republic of Moldova, making women carry the biggest burden of unpaid care work. These norms obstruct women's active participation in the labour market and social life, and discourage men from engaging in parenting.

The social protection system of the population is insensitive to the particular problems faced by men and women throughout life, and it is trying to be improved in last decades in accordance with international commitments and European standards.

Social policies in the field of protection of families with children stipulate explicit provisions regarding the equal right of parents regarding the granting of childcare leave, but the principle of equality in honouring responsibilities and obligations in family life is not respected. This situation is caused by the fact that patriarchal norms are maintained in society.

The current social protection system does not consider the needs of women as a specific and vulnerable demographic group (women with young children; women in groups vulnerable to discrimination; women engaged in low-paid activities in the social sector and older women). Thus, from a strategic perspective, the social protection interventions of these groups are a priority for poverty reduction, women's empowerment, and the de facto achievement of gender equality in economic and social terms (GovMD, 2016).

In order to remedy the situation, the Government, civil society, and development partners have developed and supported multiple initiatives and projects to promote equality between genders. At the national level, the field of ensuring equality between women and men has been substantially improved in recent decades: increasing the number of women in decision-making positions, the opening of citizens to support women in politics and decision-making positions, the inclusion of the gender dimension in some sectoral policies, increasing information and awareness, as well as improving the skills of specialists in the field, etc.

However, a multitude of problems in the field of social protection policies still persist:

- a) insufficient integration of the gender dimension in public policies and gender impact analysis in the field of social protection;
- b) lack of social reintegration programs for women in vulnerable groups;
- c) stereotypical perception of women as the main group of providers social care and protection services, considered less prestigious and lower paid;
- d) reduced involvement of men in the process of growth and education of children and caring for disabled family members

Other gaps that reduce the effectiveness of family and child-oriented social services and actions are related to territorial differences (urban and rural environment), regarding the degree of development of social service networks; the social services in rural localities are insufficient or even non-existent; lack of information on social services among the rural population; the requirements for confirming eligibility for social services are considered complicated, which generates the applicant's refusal.

### A pressing policy response to support children and families in the context of COVID-19

#### *The impact of Covid-19 on children and families*

Studies to date show that the COVID-19 crisis, complemented by the economic crisis, will exacerbate social inequality, increase poverty and may even lead to political and social destabilization, especially in countries where the living standards are low and the capacity of governments to support the population is limited. This situation also refers to the Republic of Moldova (Policy Brief, 2020).

Families in the Republic of Moldova encountered social and economic difficulties until the COVID-19 pandemic, but with its onset, the problems escalated, creating uncertainty. Many families with children have lost their source of income, and the well-being of their children and parents has been compromised.

Quarantine not only imposed isolation on children and their families but also caused certain services to be suspended, compromising thus access to social, education and health services.

The cessation of the activity of school and preschool institutions in Moldova has created difficulties for parents in caring for children, and has led to overworking, especially for women. For many families, the COVID-19 pandemic meant coping, for the first time, with work and childcare responsibilities at the same time in the same place. Ensuring work-life balance has become a difficult goal to achieve (CCD INCE, 2021).

National studies have found the severity of the problems in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the amplification of pre-existing risks in communities (CCF Moldova, 2020):

- health inequalities and limited access to medical and social services;
- inequity in education;
- deepening poverty, etc.

- in many rural localities, where for many families the source of livelihood is agriculture, the situation has been aggravated by the consequences of natural disasters;
- reducing the volume of remittances, etc.

Distance learning became a challenge from the point of view of organization and time management, elements difficult to control for students, but also teachers. Approximately 434000 students from all academic institutions at all levels were forced to stay home (starting from March 11 until the end of the scholar year, May 30). With an internet penetration rate in the Republic of Moldova of about 79.9% in 2019 (Electronic Government Agency, June 2020), considerably reduced value compared to the penetration rate of 90% in the EU in 2019, distance learning has proved to be a difficult task for almost 5% of total students, and for 10.6% of the total teachers who do not have access to ICT technology (laptop, tablet or internet access) (National Council of Students, June 2020). This fact made it impossible to send and receive instructions (not to mention the organization of lessons and the monitoring/evaluation of learning progress) for a substantial share of students and teachers. Potentially worst affected are families with school-age children living in environments with a poor internet connection, for example, those in rural areas (74.5% fixed internet connection versus 86.1% in urban areas), low-income households (56.7% internet connectivity) (Electronic Government Agency, June 2020).

More than 500,000 children from Moldova stayed at home in isolation with their families (NBS, UNICEF, 2020a). Local Public Authorities (LPA) representatives and community social workers highlighted the problems related to the supervision of children in the conditions of transition to distance education. Many children become in the risk group because they were left unattended in the situation when their parents were employed (CCD INCE, 2021).

There were cases in the child protection sector when the parents, tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, were hospitalized, and the children were left at home under the remote supervision of the community social worker. In such cases, the social workers provided telephone contact with the children, but also with the neighbours, without making home visits, because they were also in quarantine (CCD INCE, 2021).

Likewise, it was found that during the state of emergency some social services stopped their activity altogether, and the alternative care services, especially of the institutional type, did not receive new children due to quarantine.

Most of the time, at the community level, during the state of emergency, the main activity in the social field was limited to providing aid for families at risk and less - to monitor them.

The COVID-19 pandemic also exacerbated the risks of domestic violence and violence against children. The isolation measures have further aggravated the situation of children already exposed to abusive, neglectful and unsafe environments. At the same time, many children became, for the first time, victims of violence. All the stress that comes along with the pandemic circumstances is conducive to adults' aggressive behaviour towards children. The support measures for children outside the family home, including protection and schooling services, were not always accessible to children.

The risk factors conducive to violence, abuse, and neglect of children amid the pandemic are (UNICEF Moldova, 2020):

- growing poverty and food insecurity due to loss of jobs and income;
- children not being able to pursue education neither in person nor online;
- children being more involved with the digital devices, alongside less oversight by their caregivers, which exposes children to the risk of online violence;
- unavailability of nutritious meals for children which used to be provided in school and the lack of care programs.
- a different routine for children/caregivers;
- higher consumption of alcohol and/or prohibited substances among adolescents/parents/caregivers;
- ad-hoc arrangements with regards to child oversight when the parents/caregiver has to go to work etc.

The UNICEF assessment revealed that the most frequently traditional form of discipline is scolding children. One of the key issues of violence against children, especially as regards verbal and psychological abuse (shouting, humiliating or threatening), as well as some forms of corporal punishment (slapping or hair pulling), is that those who commit them do not see a problem. Although Moldova does not have official data on violence against children during the pandemic, the number of calls to the Child Helpline increased significantly (UNICEF Moldova, 2020). More often than not, the victims do not seek support out of fear or embarrassment.

The National Centre for Prevention of Child Abuse statement that many cases of violence, abuse and neglect against children remain undiscovered. On the one hand, many children suffered through a range of forms of violence without having had the possibility to report them, and on the other hand, as children did not go to school – the teachers were not able to notice the red flags indicative of potential abuse (UN WOMEN, 2020).

Once the lockdown of March-April ended and the restrictions became more relaxed – the number of case notifications increased significantly by 45% in May-June 2020 compared to May-June 2019 (UNICEF Moldova, 2020). School and kindergarten teachers identified around 3,500 suspected cases of physical and emotional abuse, neglect, labour exploitation, sexual harassment, and bullying in the first half of the year 2020 (UNICEF, 2020)

#### The support provided by the State

During the state of emergency and quarantine, the protection measures applied by the central national authorities to support the population, families with children, including vulnerable groups, are:

- the establishment of emergency unemployment benefit of 130 EUR (2775 MDL), including for persons returned from abroad by applying online;
- the increase of the minimum guaranteed monthly income during the state of emergency (by 14%, amounting to about 61 EUR);
- strengthening the social protection of disadvantaged families by improving the social assistance program:
  - ✓ the increase (from 50% to 75%) of the amount of the minimum guaranteed monthly income for each child, valid including after the lifting of the state of emergency;
  - ✓ extension of social benefit for disadvantaged families whose term expires, throughout the state of emergency. The number of families receiving social payment benefit in April-May 2020 increased by about 37% compared to March 2020. Of at least one social payment that benefited about 75,700 families, the average size of the benefit was about 53 EUR.
- the extension of the disability term ex-officio until the expiration of the emergency term and the persons continue to be insured with pensions and benefits.
- distribution at home by the Post Office of Moldova of pensions and allowances;
- during the quarantine period, public employees were given a three-week leave period with full payment of salaries;
- establishment of the subsidy mechanism for enterprises and non-commercial organizations that are technically unemployed (refund of taxes and fees and medical and social insurance in the amount of 60% - 100% for the emergency period);

- a monthly salary increase of up to one salary for front-line health workers and a 50% salary increase for urgent care and primary care directly involved in providing healthcare to patients with COVID-19

National authorities continued to support the provision of telephone support services for children, people with disabilities, and women. To respond to children's needs, an internal chat was set up since the beginning of the pandemic. It enables reporting and submitting written requests. The number of calls to the on-line support channel of the Child Helpline service has increased since the emergency regime has been established.

A key role in managing the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic at the Community level has gone to local public authorities (CCD INCE, 2021). LPA representatives came up with a series of measures, mainly aimed at vulnerable groups and at-risk:

- supplying families at risk with main necessities (food, protection and hygiene products, etc.);
- informing and guiding jobseekers to the Employment Agencies;
- establishing partnerships with economic agents to help vulnerable and at-risk populations;
- financial support and food, individual hygiene packages offered by the diaspora, NGOs, charities etc.;
- organizing groups of volunteers to distribute aid and provide psychological support.

To ensure distance learning in the conditions of the pandemic, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MECR) has undertaken numerous activities. Supported by national and international partners, it has developed a training and response plan for COVID-19, as well as methodologies and regulations for distance learning. MECR has also launched teacher training programs in the field of distance learning, positive parenting education (UN Moldova, 2020), as well as video and television tutorials for the preparation of national exams. MECR also developed the "Instruction on the organization of psychological assistance to children/students, parents and teachers during the suspension of the educational process", and subsequently launched an online program of psychological assistance for young people, parents, teachers, and psychoeducation teams.

To address the lack of necessary IT equipment and internet connectivity, MECC distributed educational packages for children with disabilities and those who do not have access to online information technologies and materials available free of charge for distance learning

and positive parental education during the pandemic and recovery period. The public and private sectors have implemented several initiatives related to the digitalization of education. For example, in partnership with mobile and internet operators in the country, MECR launched the "Connect teachers" campaign, offering teachers free internet access for two months.

Pressing policy responses:

- ✓ Adjusting structural social assistance policies to include measures of emergency resilience.
- ✓ Development of personnel management policies in the field of assistance in times of crisis and human resource capacity in this direction.
- ✓ Training of staff in social assistance structures and providers of social services how to act and provide social services according to emergency needs.
- ✓ Creating support groups in the field of social assistance to support central public authorities in developing methodological instructions and guides for different vulnerable population groups, including families with children, and social services in compliance with the emergency measures applied.
- ✓ The collaboration of central and local public authorities with civil society to unify efforts, and more effective planning targeted actions to support vulnerable groups in times of emergency.
- ✓ Creating national and local emergency funds to ensure financial support for emerging crisis measures.
- ✓ Mapping and assessment of families with associated vulnerability factors (number of children, family type, income level, health status, etc.) to distribute material aid as a matter of priority, in conditions of limited resources.
- ✓ Digitization of social services and the capacity of staff to provide apart from online social and medical services.
- ✓ Creating the necessary conditions for making information accessible to people with different types of disabilities.
- ✓ Capital investment in ICT technology and connectivity is strictly necessary to ensure the inclusion of all pupils and teachers at all levels.
- ✓ Appropriate investment in the development of e-learning tools and capacity building of all those involved to improve the learning process in these conditions.

- ✓ Mechanisms for closer cooperation between the education system and the parent community need to be put in place. This is especially necessary for parents of children with disabilities, socially vulnerable families, and those with many children.

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## 16 MONTENEGRO - National report on family support policy & provision

**Branko Boskovic**

### 16.1 Trends and issues related to demography

#### 1. *Fertility rates;*

Table 1. *Fertility rate*

Year	Total fertility rate
2014	1.75
2015	1.7
2016	1.8
2017	1.88
2018	1.8
2019	1.8

The fertility rate has been almost stagnant from 2014 to 2019, moving from 1.75 to 1.8 and remaining at 1.8 from 2016 to 2019.

#### 2. *Families with children by number of children;*

2011:

The latest information about families in Montenegro is for 2011, when the national census was held. There were 192.242 households in Montenegro and 167.177 families with an average of 3,3 members. The new census is being held in 2021, and will therefore provide the latest data (Monstat, 2013a).

Table 2. *Families with children in per cent, 2011*

Type of the family	%
Married parents with or without children	78%
Cohabiting parents with or without children	4%
Single fathers with at least one child	3%
Single mothers with at least one child	15%

*3. Percentage of the population from 0 to 18;*

Table 3. *Percentage of the population from 0 to 18*

Year	No.
2014	N/A
2015	N/A
2016	22.1
2017	22.1
2018	21.9
2019	21.8

(Monstat, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2018, 2019b, 2010b).

*4. Percentage of population over working (retiring) age;*

Table 4. *Percentage of population over working (retiring) age*

Year	No.
2014	13.5
2015	13.9
2016	14.2
2017	15
2018	15.1
2019	15.4

(Monstat, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2018, 2019b, 2010b)

There is a steady increase in the number of people aged 65+. The current numbers are lower than the European Union averages, however keeping in mind the current population trends, it can be expected that there will be a further increase in the population of this age group.

*5.Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities;*

Table 5. *National structure of Montenegro in 2011 Census*

Nationality	%
Montenegrins	44.98
Serbs	28.73
Bosniaks	8.65
Albanians	4.91
Muslims	3.31

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Croats	0.97
Others	8.45

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Table 6. *Languages spoken, 2011 census*

Language	%
Montenegrins	36.97
Serbian	42.88
Bosnian	5.33
Albanian	5.26
Croatian	0.45
Others	9.11

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Table 7. *Religions, 2011 Census*

Religion	%
Orthodox	72.07
Catholics	3.43
Islam	15.97
Muslims	3.13
Atheists	1.23

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Others	4.17
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(Monstat, 2011)

*6. Identify vulnerable groups as documented in the social policy literature)*

No Data

*7. Migration patterns;*

According to the census data from 2011, 80% of the population has been living in Montenegro and have not left the territory, while 20% have been abroad for one year or longer. The highest number of migrants is coming from Serbia (55.560), Bosnia and Herzegovina (21.849), Croatia (8.821), Kosovo (8.137), and Germany (6.608) (Monstat, 2012).

2015: immigrants 13.2%

Net migration rate 2015-2020: -0.8 migrants/1.000 population (IOM, 2020)

**16.2 Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles, and children’s living arrangements**

*(i) family household types;*

Table 8. *Households with the number of members, 2011 census*

Number	%
1	18
2	21
3-5	52
+6	9

(Monstat, 2013b).

The majority of households in Montenegro have 3-5 members, which includes parents and children. On certain occasions, other members may be included as well, such as elderly persons. Elderly homes are not yet a common practice in Montenegro, but their number is on the rise. However, it is still a socially accepted norm that older parents live with their children.

*(ii) Marriage and divorce rates: 2019*

Marriage rate 5.7; Divorce rate 1.4

(Monstat, 2020b).

- *Lone-parent families;*

Approximation for 2015: around 14% of families in total, 11.337 families where the mother is the lone parent, and 2.652 families where the father is the lone parent. Data is a calculation based upon the available information: (Dan, 2018).

*(iii) New family forms such as same-sex couple households;*

The law on same-sex couples has been adopted but it is still not being implemented. The law was adopted on July 1, 2020, and its implementation is scheduled to begin on July 1, 2021. (Law on the life partnership of the same sex persons, 2020)

*(iv) Family structures and changes across social groups;*

No Data

*(v) Children and youth living in institutions;*

Table 9. *Children and youth living in institutions*

Year	Number
2010	156
2018	166

(Government of Montenegro, 2019b).

- *Children in out-of-home care such as foster care; 2018: 729; (Government of Montenegro, 2019b).*

*(vi) Home-based support;*

No Data

### 16.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare

There has been a significant improvement in the legal framework in the last couple of years, which enabled stricter control and an enhanced overview of how benefits are provided. However, there has not been a significant positive improvement in the situation of families with children, as many NGOs are pointing out. The major problems concern kindergartens which are often overcrowded and do not provide a quality learning environment for children, therefore affecting their development in the long run. (Dan, 2017).

*(i) Poverty rates;*

Table 10. *At-risk-of-poverty rates*

Year	%
2013	25.2
2014	24.1
2015	24.4
2016	24
2017	23.6

Table 11. *AROPE rates*

Year	%
2013	37.3

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2014	24.1
2015	24.4
2016	24
2017	23.6

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(Monstat, 2020c)

*(ii) Employment/unemployment rates;*

Table 12. *Employment rates*

Year	Employment	Men	Women
2018	48.70%	54.5%	40.8%
2019	56%	55.7%	42.1%

Table 13. *Unemployment rates*

Year	Employment	Men	Women
2018	15.20%	14.70%	15.7%
2019	15.10%	15.20%	15.1%

(Monstat, 2019a; 2020a)

*(iii) Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage related to gender, age, ethnicity, migrant status, and other social dimensions;*

Table 14. *Unemployment rates per age group*

Age	%
15+	15.1
15-24	25.5
25-49	16
50-64	9.9
65+	3.9

(Monstat, 2020b)

*(iv) Patterns of education disadvantage;*

No Data

*(v) Major social welfare trends such as disadvantage risks, welfare benefit receipt levels;*

Montenegrin authorities do not follow Eurostat statistics and a significant amount of data is not collected and as a result is unavailable.:

Table 15. *The number of users of social benefits for 2018*

Type of the benefit	%
family security (families)	9,319
family security (individuals)	31,066
personal disability benefit	2,500
care and assistance benefit	15,298

child benefit (entitled individuals)	7,662
child benefit (children)	14,974

Table 16. *Net family security benefits in 2019 in EUR*

Type of the benefit	Amount
Individual	63.5
single member family	65.86
family with two members	76.20
family with three members	91.50
family with four members	108
family with five or more members	120.70
Child benefit	23.68-39.57

Child benefit amounts from 23.68 to 39.57 EUR, depending on the status of the entitled person (receiving other social assistance or not, having both or one parent, receiving disability benefit or not).

*(vi) Housing problems;*

No Data

#### **16.4 The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions, and actors which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision:**

- *Membership to the EU;*

NO

- *Relationship with European Union*

Montenegro has been a candidate country since November 2010. Three negotiations chapters were provisionally closed out of 33 in total. Reports of the European Commission state progress in this policy area but there is still a need for further improvement of the legal framework and the practice.

- *Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy*

The key actor in the policy area was the Ministry of Work and Social Welfare, now called Ministry of Finance and Social Welfare. It frames the policy and is in charge of the benefits payments and their legal framework. There are a number of NGOs who are active in the policy area related to family and social policy who influence the legal framework but also have a number of relevant projects which are currently or have been implemented. NGOs can be divided among those who are active in the area of family and children mainly (NGO Parents) or are focused on other social groups, e.g., people with disabilities or some other (e.g. Juventas, Association of Youth with Disabilities). International organisations are very active, especially UNICEF. Their major role is in research and providing assistance for policy framing and implementation.

- *Influential lobbying groups,*

Lobbying is not recognised in the legal framework in Montenegro and consequently, the previously mentioned NGOs are the major actors, influencing decision-making. NGOs act as interest groups in pre-parliamentary debates and often in media, pressuring government in decision-making and defining the legal framework in relevant policy areas.

- *Influential policy/research networks*

There are no research networks devoted to family research.

- *The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support*

The political system does not play a relevant role in this policy area because of the long domination of one political party and the major political divide was for or against the government. There was a government change in August 2020, the impact of which is yet to be seen. There were no relevant policy divides regarding family issues among political parties since it has not been a relevant political issue.

- *The democratic system and main political parties; unitary vs federal state structures; centralised vs decentralised structures)*

Montenegro is a unitary country, and all decisions are made on a national level. Municipalities are able to make decisions on specific matters regarding families, e.g., financial assistance in specific moments.

- *The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular (e.g., Ministry roles, national vs local/regional government roles);*

As already mentioned, the Ministry of Finance and Social Welfare, previously the Ministry of Work and Social Welfare, is the major institution for deciding on matters regarding the family and other related issues. There is often a consultation process with relevant state institutions and NGOs who are active in the policy area or with Union representatives, e.g., when the labour law changes were discussed. Municipalities are not involved in decision making unless it directly refers to them.

- *The ways in and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policymaking and reviews;*

Apart from state institutions, other actors are involved in the creation of the major strategic documents, and they can influence changes of the legal framework but only to a certain extent. Public institutions play a major role and other actors are involved only when it is necessary, e.g. when the law concerning civic partnership was discussed at first and later (July 2020) adopted in the Parliament. NGOs are the major representatives on non-state actors and are often considered as the major interest group, representing families, children or other social groups.

### **16.5 List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year 2000**

Strategy on protection from the violence in the family 2016-2020, both are mentioned, as the key actors to which the strategy aims

Strategy on the establishment of the right of the child 2019-2023 (Government of Montenegro, 2019b), both are mentioned, but the focus is on children. The strategy aims at influencing decision making and the processes central to children's rights: the Council for children's rights, which needs to reform its structure and allow more open access for children for decision making and provide financial means to improve the Council's role; there is a need to improve the data gathering process, to increase data transparency and the mechanism of data sharing; increase the participation of the non-public actors, especially NGOs; move from a legal framework to implementation analysis; increase the quality of the monitoring system of

children's as well as the quality of the competences pertaining to the staff engaged in the work with children.

Strategy on the integration of persons with disabilities in Montenegro 2016-2020 (Government of Montenegro, 2016c), both are mentioned, as families are actors who would care about children with disabilities and are part of the target group. The strategy aims at creating more equal and inclusive society, creating conditions for persons with disabilities to be fully included in the society, including legal equality, as well as prevention and prevention of discrimination. It refers to their ability to be part of the society on equal terms and participate in social life. It also refers to the access to their medical and social care on equal terms, but education and other areas too. Youth are especially relevant when the labour market is concerned, and there is a need for increased participation of people with disabilities.

Strategy for the development of the social and child protection system for the period from 2018 to 2022 (Government of Montenegro, 2018): both are mentioned and the Strategy first states all the achievements that have been accomplished in this policy area but also states the need to improve the current normative framework. It refers to standards of social services for children, licencing of service providers, as well as improving the system of service providers and the quality of education of the staff. There is also a need to improve services further, lower the number of persons in institutions and childcare, develop the system of foster care, increase the participation of municipalities and the organisation of civil society.

Strategy on employment and development of human resources 2016-2020 (Government of Montenegro, 2016f): youth are mentioned as the target group. The young are relevant because the statistics show the highest level of unemployment in this age group, just as the case has been in Europe and around the world. There is a need to increase employability and enhance knowledge, skills, and competencies, while improving social inclusion and decreasing poverty. The strategy shows the negative effects of the 2008 crisis, which severely slowed the progress in this policy area. The priorities of the strategy are to increase the level of employed people, to make the labour marker more efficient, to improve qualifications and competences required in the labour market, and promote social inclusion with decreasing poverty. One of the major policy areas concerns youth unemployment, which is seen as a strong impediment for social development. The need for careful examination of systemic and other factors which may improve their life opportunities are recognised.

Strategy for social inclusion of Roma and Egyptians 2016-2020 (Government of Montenegro, 2016d): both are mentioned, and young people are one of the target groups as well as their families. The strategy aims at including the existing policies available for the rest of the population to be open for Roma and Egyptians too. The major policy areas which the

Strategy aims for are: education, employment, living, and health protection. Youth and children are the focus of the strategy because the practice shows that it is the youth when there is a highest probability that the lifestyle of these groups is decided. It is the case because the practice shows that obtaining an education has a positive impact for their future, compared to early work or even the practice of early marriage which still exists. Institutions have to be more active to reduce this practice, as well as provide opportunities for education, while looking at ways of reducing their dropout rate.

Strategy of inclusive education 2019-2025 (Government of Montenegro, 2019a): both are mentioned, children are the target group, and the strategy is focused on children with disabilities. The strategy aims at providing inclusive education to all children, especially children with disabilities. There is a need to ensure available, accessible, and quality inclusive education on all levels. The number of children with disabilities who attend preschool and later levels of education has been on the rise, a positive outcome of the inclusive approach in Montenegro. The strategy aims at improving the inter-institutional cooperation, to make the approach and outcomes more coherent; to improve cooperation between the state and non-state actors, especially NGOs; to improve the work of relevant committees, so human rights are respected in all circumstances and situations; promote the early learning of children with disabilities; develop the culture of inclusiveness in the society as the whole; constantly work on the improvement of the educational process related to children with disabilities; improve the services offered by day care centres and resource centres; improve accessibility of schools; and improve the specialised educational resources.

Strategy of early and preschool care and education 2016-2020 (Government of Montenegro, 2016a), both are mentioned, children are the target group. The strategy has the leading principle of providing fulfilment of developmental needs for all children up to school age, by ensuring quality educational and infrastructural services, provided by competent individuals and professionals, with the active involvement of families and communities. The aims of the strategy are: to increase the number of children who attend preschool education, especially up to three years of age and in accordance with the international standards; improve the quality of services provided; and introduce innovative optimal and sustainable models of financing.

Strategy of development of the higher education in Montenegro 2016-2020 (Government of Montenegro, 2016b): both are mentioned, and youth are the target group. The strategic aim of Montenegro is to develop an effective and quality system of higher education, which will have a positive impact on the country's economy. Reforms in higher education have been implemented for more than a decade, resulting in a system which is fully compatible with educational systems of European Union member states. The strategy aims at improving models

of studying, and to improve and optimise the study programmes. It also aims at enhancing the quality of the staff and the education provided, as well as introduce interdisciplinarity of studies. The young are the major target group since they are students and the educational system aims at improving their opportunities for a future life, especially the labour market.

Strategy on protection from the family violence 2016-2020 (Government of Montenegro, 2016e), targets children and families. It states that the major challenges in the forthcoming period are: the legal protection, prevention in relation to social values, protection and support through institutions and multidisciplinary approach with efficient coordination and overview of the implementation of the law. The aims of the strategy are: adjust the national legal framework with the Convention of the Council of Europe on prevention and combating violence against women; increase the specialist qualifications and multidisciplinary approach in the implementation of regulation in the area of protection of violence in the family; increase the level of the public consciousness of violence on women in the family; improve the system of the institutional protection from violence in the family; improve availability of justice and legal protection from violence in the family.

Strategy of prevention and protection of children from violence 2017-2021 (Government of Montenegro, 2017): both are mentioned. The strategy recognises the negative effects of violence on children, especially its lifelong effects, impeding both psychological and physical health. The major aim of the strategy is to create a social environment without violence for happier childhood in Montenegro. It also aims to provide all children with protection from violence. The strategy stresses the need to change the approach towards children and to rethink it in the best interest of the child. There is a need for the increased participation of children; to improve the right of a child to life, being and development; and to secure non-discrimination, together with the higher involvement of the public.

*(a) whether participation of families and young people has been mentioned in the document*

*(b) the extent to which such participation has been implemented (no line limit here)*

The active participation of families and young people varies according to the document. As stated, youth are seen as one of most important target groups and action plans for strategies state their participation on a yearly basis. Successful implementation of goals varies, especially for children with disabilities but it is one of the areas with the highest success rate, in the number of children who attended regular preschool education institutions but have also continued their education at high schools.

## **16.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services:**

### *(i) The priorities in child welfare and family policy*

The care system in Montenegro is mainly established on the passive financial support, based in the Law on social and childcare and its previous legal forms. It has been during the last decade or so which saw a shift in focus to education, especially preschool education, and its reforms. New services were developed to cater for disadvantaged groups, especially children with disability, with the aim of their inclusion in the regular educational network. There is a discussion of increasing the child benefit to minimum 30 euros and to make it available for all children, which is not the case at the moment.

### *(ii) The main types of family provision and support and key features (e.g. different types of cash support (universal and targeted, work-family reconciliation measures and children's/family services, child care etc)*

The Law on social and childcare provides the major legal framework and different benefits are:  
Net family security benefit in 2019:

- 1) individual 63.50 EUR;
- 1a) single member family 65.86 EUR;
- 2) family with two members 76.20 EUR;
- 3) family with three members 91.50 EUR;
- 4) family with four members 108.00 EUR;
- 5) family with five or more members 120.70 EUR

The law on social and child protection defines other social benefits for parents, carers and families: new-born child allowance, child benefit, family benefit for a new-born child for the unemployed parent, and the assistance for children with disabilities (Law on social and childcare, 2017).

Provision of food in public preschool education institutions as the benefit, but since preschool education is free and universal, this benefit is not considered as relevant.

The new-born child allowance: one-time payment, paid when the child is born and it is set at 109.07 EUR, except for users of the material security benefits, who receive 130.88 EUR (Law on social and childcare, 2017).

A child benefit: financial benefit which is provided for children up to 18 years of age. It is available for children receiving material security benefit, benefit for care and assistance, personal disability benefit, who do not have parental care or whose parents or carers are in unfavourable working conditions and are receiving the material security benefit (Ibid.). It amounts from 23.68 to 39.57 EUR, depending on the conditions defined by the Law.

*(iii) The types of funding involved such as state, charity vs private sector providers and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners*

There are no other additional funding sources, which are worth mentioning here. Private funding is not a regular activity and depends on the individuals.

*(iv) Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations*

There are yearly evaluations which are published and show progress from the yearly action plans. Action plans are part of the strategic framework and are defined every year for the following year. The Ministry in charge of the specific policy area defines goals and monitors their implementation, also defining who is involved in the specific activity and in which role.

*(v) Limitations in national and official data and statistics*

There is a lack of data, it is inconsistent with the Eurostat and OECD statistics and sometimes incomparable. There is a need for further improvements and coordination so the official data can be used in a more consistent and comparable way. It refers to the Montenegrin Statistical Agency (Monstat) but also to other actors like the Employment Agency whose data are inconsistent even for different years. There have been improvements in Monstat's data in the last few years, showing a positive way forward for the research but also the actual figures showing Montenegrin current status on specific indicators.

## **16.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision. What are the prominent policy and practice developments related to family support services from children's rights, social equality, and evidence-informed perspectives?**

*(i) What are the pressing policy, practice and research challenges impeding developments?*

Montenegro has significantly improved in these policy areas, both the legal framework and the practice. However, there is a need of further improvement of the practice; in the sense that

quality, legal framework does not often translate into good practice. The reason behind this is often the lack of capacity of state institutions which are responsible for implementation. There is a need to change the perspective and perception of the public in relation to the issues of family and children, towards a more contemporary and modern view, which is slowly gaining pace. The data shows a higher level on critical statistical points, e.g. the poverty rate, compared to the European Union average; this and similar issues need to be addressed so the future Montenegrin citizens do not lag behind their counterparts in the rest of the EU. Finally, there is a lack of research which would go into a more detailed analysis of certain policies and which would relate to the inadequate quality of the practice compared to quality legal framework.

*(ii) What are the pressing gaps in provision?*

There are a few issues which need to be addressed. There is a prevailing lack concerning the capacity of institutions, in the sense of human resources with adequate knowledge and skills, in particular with public preschool educational institutions (Peters, 2011). Secondly, there is a need to rethink the current practice of funding; high expenditure on preschool education and other benefits for children do not result in their welfare, as expressed in statistical measures. Furthermore, it is necessary to re-evaluate the approach and be more future-oriented, while continuing the undertaken reforms towards achieving a higher implementation success.

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## 17 THE NETHERLANDS - National report on family support policy & provision

**Caroline Vink**

### 17.1 Trends and issues related to demography

(Include Eurostat statistics from Excel sheet provided) under each point and a short comment about trends. Please retrieve statistics from excel sheet provided. Please provide statistics from 2010, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 (Where available). If only more recent statistics are provided, kindly provide the more recent statistics. Stake holders' information, where relevant is to be included. Comment about the reliability of the information given)

*(i) Fertility rates*

Include data from Excel Sheet for the following years: 2010, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 (where available). Short comment about Trends

The fertility rate has been decreasing gradually in the Netherlands, but is on average EU level. The average age of women having their first child is also on the increase; women in the Netherlands are now an average of 30.1 years when they have their first child.

Table 1. *Number of live births per woman*

Year	% children
2010	1.79
2015	1.66
2016	1.66
2017	1.62
2018	1.59
2019	1.57

Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/population-demography-migration-projections/visualisations>

Table 2. *Families with children by number of children\**

Per year: families with one child, with two children and with three or more children as a percentage of all families with children.

Regardless of parental situation (one-parent, non-married or married parents).

There has been a steady decline in the number of children per household in the Netherlands, but a very small increase of one child being born and looked after by at least one parent.

Year	1	2	3 or more
2010	40,8	42,5	16,7
2011	41,2	42,3	16,5
2012	41,5	42,2	16,3
2013	41,8	42,1	16,1
2014	42,3	41,9	15,9
2015	42,5	41,7	15,7
2016	42,7	41,7	15,7
2017	42,6	41,7	15,7
2018	42,7	41,6	15,8
2019	42,7	41,5	15,8

Source: Netherlands Statistics (CBS) (<https://opendata.cbs.nl/statline/#/CBS/nl/dataset/37975/table?dl=3C48E>)

Table 3. *Percentage of the population from 0 to 18\**

Include data from Excel Sheet for the following years: 2010, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 (where available). Short comment about Trends

Like elsewhere in the EU, the population under 19 is declining while the population over 65 is on the increase. In 2019 the percentage of under 19 and over 65 was almost equal but the expectation is that in the next 10 years the over 65 will exceed the young population. The retirement age has been increased to 67 in the Netherlands, and the participation of this age group in the labour market is still significant. At the same time, the age of (full) participation of young people in the labour market is also increasing.

Year	% children
2010	21,2%
2015	20,3%
2016	20,1%
2017	19,9%
2018	19,7%
2019	19,4%

Table 4. *Percentage of population over working (retiring) age\**

Include data from Excel Sheet for the following years: 2010, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 (where available). Short comment about Trends

Year	% over 65
2010	15,3%
2015	17,8%
2016	18,2%

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2017	18,5%
2018	18,8%
2019	19,2%

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Source Eurostat (65 and over)

*(ii) Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities\**

Identify vulnerable groups as documented in the social policy literature

The Netherlands is not a homogeneous country and has a longstanding history of migration and ethnic diversity. It is a very densely populated country with no significant differences between the big cities and rural areas.

There is not a single indicator or definition of vulnerable groups in our social policy data or literature. For a long time, nonwestern migrants were identified in groups, but our national statistics have done away with such definitions. In relation to groups at risk of poverty or social exclusion certain groups were identified as being more at risk, e.g., single mothers, and therefore were exempt of certain duties, such as single mothers with children under five not having to enter the labour market. However, there are currently no such definitions.

Netherlands Statistics defines certain groups as being vulnerable:

- Living in a household with dependable children and without an income from employment
- A single parent household with dependable children
- First generation migrants and refugees
- Receiving (work) disability benefits
- Being homeless
- Other vulnerabilities such as being mentally impaired

Source: Netherlands Statistics (CBS) and The Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP)

*(iii) Migration patterns\**

Include immigration and emigration statistics

The Netherlands has a longstanding history with migration which, especially in the second half of the last century, came mainly from the (former) colonies. This was followed by migration for work from other countries outside Europe. In the last 15 years, the migration background has changed significantly; more than half of the people moving to the Netherlands come from other EU countries and another growing group is so called knowledge migrants coming from Asia. The Netherlands also has a steady group - around 100.000 per year on average – emigrating from the Netherlands elsewhere.

Table 5. *Immigration*

Year	Number of immigrants
2010	126,776
2015	166,872
2016	189,232
2017	189,646
2018	194,306
2019	215,756

(Source Eurostat)

Table 6. *Emigration*

Year	Number of emigrants
2010	95,970
2015	112,330

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2016	111,477
2017	108,231
2018	109,635
2019	107,906

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(Source Eurostat)

## 17.2 Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles and children's living arrangements.

### *(i) Family household types*

In the Netherlands the definition of a household is at least two adults sharing a house together. There is a growing trend of people living alone; in 2020 18% of the population, the biggest group being young adults and women over 70. In 32% of all households in the Netherlands there is at least one minor living (also see table 3). Family households in the Netherlands are very diverse. The Netherlands was also the first country to introduce same sex marriages (2001). The majority of children living in a household do so with two married parents. In Dutch youth policy, a distinction is made between households with and without children (minors). Adult children having an income result in parents receiving less benefits. This income check is a highly debated political issue.

*No data available to represent in a table, above information is provided as context information by Netherlands Statistics*

### *(ii) Marriage and divorce rates*

There is both a declining rate in marriages and divorces over the last 10 years in the Netherlands

Table 7. *Marriages*

Year	Number of marriages
2010	75,399
2015	64,308
2016	65,249
2017	64,402
2018	64,315
2019	63,565

(Source Eurostat)

Table 8. *Divorces*

Year	Number of divorces
2010	33,723
2015	34,232
2016	33,414
2017	32,768
2018	30,729
2019	30,041

(Source Eurostat)

Table 9. *Single parent families*

Year	Number of single parent households
2010	486,250
2011	496,272
2012	510,894
2013	521,578
2014	535,870
2015	545,289
2016	557,426
2017	562,124
2018	572,419
2019	582,106

(Source Eurostat)

Unfortunately, we have no representation of percentage of single-parent households. According to Netherlands statistics during the last 10 years on average 23% of all households with minors 23% are single-parent families. There are more single-parent families in big cities like Rotterdam and Amsterdam, and relatively few single-parent households in rural areas and municipalities with a large orthodox protestant population.

*(iii) New family forms such as same-sex couple households\**

As shown above, in the Netherlands any combination of an adult taking care of a minor is seen as a family. Same-sex marriages were introduced in 2001, and for cohabiting unmarried couples there are various legal options. These forms of partnership are not necessarily related to the acknowledgement of parenthood and guardianship. Only in official marriage or registered partnership this is automatically the case, otherwise it needs to be formalized.

*(iv) Family structures and changes across social groups\**

See above

It is difficult to find correct data on the number of children being placed outside the home, especially in a way that it can be comparable to data from other countries. We have included data on children being placed outside the family in either institutions or in foster care falling under the Youth Law introduced in 2015. This does not include children being placed in institutions because of physical disabilities. In addition, in 2015 we have seen a huge system change in which all responsibilities for children and young people's social care have been decentralized to the municipalities. One of the aims was to avoid out-of-home placement. We are still in the middle of these changes.

Source The Netherlands Youth Institute, [www.youthpolicy.nl](http://www.youthpolicy.nl)

Table 10. *Children and youth living in institutions\**

Year	Number of children outside the home
2010	15,355
2015	15,663
2016	18,039
2017	20,176
2018	18,925
2019	16,132

\*Children under 20 years old, we only have five-year cohorts of data

Source Netherlands Statistics (CBS)

Table 11. *Children in out-of-home care such as foster care*

Year	Number of children in foster care
2015	25,645
2016	26,425
2017	27,285
2018	26,905
2019	27,070

Source Netherlands Statistics (CBS)

Table 12. *Home-based support*

Year	Number of children receiving ambulant care
2015	36,530
2016	62,130
2017	81,635
2018	82,345
2019	84,205

Source Netherlands Statistics (CBS)

This is data on children and families receiving ambulant care. There are no comparable definitions available regarding what kind of services fall into this category.

### 17.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare

The poverty rate in the Netherlands is quite below the EU27 average (around 6 % of the total population). However, we see that children up to 12 years have a higher risk. Over the last 10 years, around one child in every nine children grows up in poverty. Since 2013 this has been a specific policy issue, and there have been many initiatives in combating child poverty while also introducing special programmes and measures. A vulnerable group at risk of poverty is single mothers with (minor) children. A large part of the households in poverty live in the big cities.<sup>31</sup>

(i) Poverty rates\*

Table 13

Year	Poverty rate
2010	15.1
2015	16.4
2016	16.7 (break in time series)
2017	17.0
2018	16.7
2019	16.5

Source Eurostat

A high percentage of the population is employed in the Netherlands. The country also has a very low percentage of unemployed population compared to the EU27 average. This is also the case for youth unemployment. It is not possible to provide data on NEETs because this not available. Around 75% of women able to participate in the labour market are employed. However, there is a strong tradition of part-time work for women in the Netherlands. Full-time work is considered to be 35+ hours a week. Over the last years, 72% of men worked full-time (declining trend) and 26% of women (slight inclining trend).

<sup>31</sup> The Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP)

Source Netherlands Statistics (CBS)

Table 14. *Employment rate (15 – 75, percentage of active population)*

Year	Employment rate
2010	66.7
2015	65.4
2016	65.8
2017	66.7
2018	67.8
2019	68.8

(Source Eurostat)

Table 15. *Unemployment (15-75, percentage of active population)*

Year	Unemployment rate
2010	5.0
2015	6.9
2016	6.0
2017	4.9
2018	3.8
2019	3.4

(Source Eurostat)

*(ii) Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage related to gender, age, ethnicity, migrant status and other social dimensions\**

Although the Netherlands has a relatively better than EU average standard of living, which is also reflected in the statistics on employment and unemployment, there are certain patterns of disadvantage that are worth looking at, the main being education disadvantage.

*(iii) Patterns of education disadvantage*

During the last years there has been more focus on education disadvantage in the Netherlands, mainly because it is becoming clear that the system is leading to social inequalities (*kansenongelijkheid*). This is not reflected in international comparative studies such as PISA or in the EU data on early school leaving. However, it has been made visible in the UNICEF Report Card 15, *An Unfair Start*<sup>32</sup>. The Netherlands is one of the EU countries that has supposedly implemented early streaming after primary school (around the age of 11 – 12). After primary school, the type and level of secondary education are determined through testing and teachers' advice. There seems to be two issues at stake. One is that there can be a bias in the secondary education advice provided by teachers, which particularly places children with a migrant background or coming from lower social economic status households at a disadvantage. Nonetheless, there seems to be a societal disadvantage in the outcomes for young adults depending on their level of secondary education. It is too early to present data on this, but it will be on the policy agenda in the Netherlands for the coming years.

*(iv) Major social welfare trends such as disadvantage risks, welfare benefit receipt levels\**

Another issue is the increase in the take up of social services, which can especially be seen in the social care services for children, young people and families, but also in the increase of benefits being provided. The Netherlands has an extensive provision of benefits, such as health and housing benefits and a system of unemployment benefits based on years of employment and social assistance. There is a general child allowance. With the exception of the general child allowance, most of the benefits are means tested. The complication in the system is that some of the benefits are being paid when applied but can be challenged by the government based on tax declarations processed years later, which then need to be paid back. In 2019/2020 the Netherlands has been seeing such a case even leading to the fall of the government.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> [Innocenti Report Card 15 \(unicef-irc.org\)](https://www.unicef-irc.org)

The below are two tables on benefits; the first showing the total amount of all possible benefits being paid in the Netherlands and the uptake of social services, and the second table showing the number of people receiving disability, employment, and social assistance benefits.

Table 16a. *National payments benefits*

Year	Total social benefits	Total social services
2010	101,622	30,587
2015	110,031	35,426
2016	111,824	37,069
2017	113,458	38,288
2018	116,919	39,476
2019	121,950	43,422

(Source: Statistics the Netherlands)

Table 16b. *Number of people receiving benefits x1000 persons*

Year	Disability	Unemployment	Social Security
2010	829,7	267	334,2
2015	816,1	429,8	423
2016	811,1	441,1	436,5
2017	810,2	378,1	441,6
2018	813,6	296,5	425

(Data for 2019 is unavailable)

*(v) Housing problems*

Affordable housing is an important item on the policy and political agenda in the Netherlands. The Netherlands has a long history of housing policy and social housing; the first law on housing going back as far as 1937. However, for a few years already due to changes in policy and a shortage in the housing market, there is a lack of affordable housing. This is particularly affecting young people and low-income groups. The need for housing has also increased due to an increase of single households. Certain households are at risk being unable to pay their rent (table 7), and there is certainly an increase of homelessness and affordable housing for young people.

Table 17. *People living in social housing in danger of or unable to meet the rent*

Year	Unable to meet rent
2014	14,1%
2015	14,9%
2016	12,2% (different income calculation)
2017	12,0%
2018	15,7%
2019	14,3%

Source Lokale monitor Wonen – waarstaatjegemeente.nl

Table 18. *Homelessness*

Year	Homeless 18-65
2010	22,000
2011	23,000
2012	26,000
2013	24,000
2014	26,000
2015	30,000
2016	29,000
2017	33,000
2018	37,000
2019	2019 data not available

*Summary: The broader socio-economic context and trends which influences children’s, parental and family circumstances and environments\**

(up to 15 lines)

The Netherlands is a high-income country with reasonable standards for affordable living. The unemployment level, including young people, is below the EU average. This is also the case for families and children growing up in poverty, although there is an increasing number of children growing up in poverty. The whole system change of social care for children and families, decentralizing the responsibilities to the municipalities has not yet reached its intended effects. There has been a huge increase in cost of services and a higher number of children and families needing a form of child and youth care support. This had led to a changing focus on specialized services and less on prevention and low threshold support for families. The main challenges for

the Netherlands in the coming years concern the increasing inequality in education outcomes and affordable housing.<sup>34</sup>

#### **17.4 The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions and actors' which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision**

*(i) Membership to the EU\**

- Yes
- No

*(ii) Relationship with European Union*

The Netherlands is one of the founding members of the European Union. It is a net contributor. The Netherlands relies heavily on open borders and cooperation with other countries, and therefore has good relations within Europe. The no vote in 2015 on the European constitution was quite a shock in the country and initiated a more critical phase in Dutch politics towards the EU cooperation. However, the Dutch are very strongly embedded in the international cooperation in general and the EU cooperation in particular.

*(iii) Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy \**

In the Netherlands the concept family policy does not exist as a concept (explained below), but there are a number of policies that allow families to reconcile work and family life.

Dutch policies towards families have been caught between social policies focusing on income redistribution and the labour market, policies that are increasingly inspired by a 'welfare-to-work' agenda, and a gender equity policy attempting to encourage both men and women to share work and family responsibilities. Currently, the dominant idea concerning the relationship between work and care is being transformed by combining its traditional corporatist traits, i.e. the familiarization of care responsibilities, with an even less prominent role of the state.<sup>35</sup>

*(iv) Influential lobbying groups\**

(not more than 10 lines)

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<sup>34</sup> The Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP)  
<sup>35</sup> The Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP)

These are difficult to identify and have not been directed at families. General lobby for the foundation of the welfare state have benefited families.

*(v) Influential policy/research networks\**

The main framework involving research on family and child related issues is ZonMW, They provide funding for many pilot and research programmes in the child and family domain.

The Netherlands youth institute is a public institute funded by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, and is a national knowledge centre collecting, enriching, explaining and sharing knowledge on children, youth and families.<sup>36</sup>

*(vi) The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support \**

There is no such thing as family policy in the Netherlands; the definition of a family is very broad in law and policies. The welfare state, although heavily influenced by liberal politics, provides the basis for parents and children.

*(vii) The democratic system and main political parties; (unitary vs federal state structures; centralised vs decentralised structures) \**

The Netherlands is a parliamentary democracy. Dutch people can choose who represents them in parliament. The Netherlands is also a constitutional monarchy. The King's position is laid down in the Constitution. In the Netherlands, political power is divided between several different authorities. The central Dutch government is the key player in the running of the Netherlands.

However, municipalities, water boards provinces have a part to play in Dutch politics. Since 2015, all responsibilities for support and care for children and families have been decentralized to the 350 municipalities. The provinces no longer play a part in this, and legislation is provided by the state.

*(viii) The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular (e.g. Ministry roles, national vs local/regional government roles) \**

The support for families and children lay with the municipalities. However, the state provides the framework and legislation. The Ministry of Health and Welfare have a coordination role, but

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<sup>36</sup> See websites [www.zonmw.nl](http://www.zonmw.nl); [www.nji.nl](http://www.nji.nl)

other ministries also have key roles, such as the ministry of social affairs but also finance. There is no ministry for families or children in the Netherlands<sup>37</sup>

*(ix) The ways in and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policy-making and reviews\**

(not more than 10 lines)

There is a growing tendency to include young people but also children and families in policy making. This participatory approach is certainly part of policies but not always in practice. One of the changes introduced in 2015 when the system for parents and children was decentralized was to give families and children more voice. For example, on the level of the Netherlands Youth Institute, the discourse was for a long time the influence between what is known from research and what was learned from practice. However, it is now a triangle which also includes the voice of parents and children, seeing them as experienced experts.

**17.5 List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year 2000. For each policy document indicate**

The main development has been the transition of care to the municipalities in 2015, which involved a complete overhaul of the system. Many policy documents have been published on this, both by the government and the association of Dutch municipalities, all in Dutch. A summary can be found at the reference in the footnote.<sup>38</sup>

*(i) Whether participation of families and young people has been mentioned in the document*  
\*

Yes, a more central position for parents and children is mentioned in the underlying reasons for the whole system change in 2015

*(ii) The extent to which such participation has been implemented \**

(not line limit here)

There is a discrepancy between policy and implementation when it comes to participation. However, the voices of families and children are increasingly being included. Nonetheless, it is

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<sup>37</sup> See website [www.youthpolicy.nl](http://www.youthpolicy.nl)

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.nji.nl/english/introduction-dutch-youth-policy>

not generally implemented everywhere and especially parents feel they are not included enough in decision making.

### **17.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services**

#### *(i) The priorities in child welfare and family policy\**

The decentralization of the care system has already been mentioned; it involved a complete system change. In the evaluations that have followed, it has become clear that the emphasis has been very much on integrating different organizations and providers. In the Netherlands, the carrying out of services is not executed by the state. It is the task of social organizations that mostly are structured as foundations. They are paid for carrying out these services by the (local) government. The local governments do not collect taxes but receive money for the social domain from national taxes through the national government.

The main types of family provision and support and key features (e.g. different types of cash support (universal and targeted, work-family reconciliation measures and children's/family services, childcare etc.) \*

(no line limit here)

There are many provisions for families to reconcile work and family life, such as maternity leave, although the Netherlands does not have the longest period for this leave (see OECD data). There are also related benefits, such as housing and health care benefits. Most of these benefits are means tested and related to family income. However, the child allowance (kinderbijslag, for children up to 18 years) are equal for everyone.

Many of the benefits are pre-paid, and have to be justified afterwards. A scandal on childcare benefits have laid bare the absence of trust between the government and certain identified groups. In the Dutch childcare benefit scandal, it became clear that the tax authorities accused more than 26,000 families of making fraudulent benefit claims. The majority of these families were of an ethnic background.

The types of funding involved such as state, charity vs private sector providers and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners\*

(up to 10 lines)

The majority of funding of family support provision is state funding (although mostly through local governments). There is not really such a thing as private providers that can make

a profit from their work. In addition, the role of charities is very minimal in the Netherlands. The level of further education of professionals differs enormously. There is no university education for social workers in the Netherlands, although the level of HBO, applied sciences, is at undergraduate level.

*(ii) Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations\**

The Netherlands has a tradition of ex-post evaluations and monitoring of policies. Local health services, for instance, have the legal obligation to provide data and reports about the state of the youths health every four years. Doing so is part of the recommendations of the national governments' integrated impact assessment framework for policy and legislation ("Integraal afwegingskader voor beleid en regelgeving"). Since the decentralization of youth policy in 2015, however, the responsibility to monitor or ex-post analyze is deferred to local youth authorities.

Not all policy measures are monitored or ex-post analyzed by all local governments, nor, if they do so, in a similar manner.

*(iii) Limitations in national and official data and statistics\**

Since 2015, a nearly total coverage registry of children youth care was established. However, these youth care registry data do not provide information about the type of care (other than the distinction between residential or non-residential care) and therefore do not provide information about the number of children receiving mental health care. Children without a citizen service number ("burgerservicenummer"), such as children in an asylum center, are not represented in these data. There are also no data on homeless children or the number of children engaged in child labour practice.

**17.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision. What are the prominent policy and practice developments related to family support services from children's rights, social equality and evidence-informed perspectives?**

The Netherlands traditionally had a state focus on families and children at risk. Family support was traditionally left to churches and other non-denominational providers. From 1960 onwards this started to change and (early) family support became more and more professionalized. At the beginning of 2000, more and more programmes were introduced, still with a strong focus on detecting risks. The decentralization in 2015 was introduced to integrate the different kinds of support and programmes and to provide targeted help earlier. In the first evaluation of the decentralization in 2017, it was concluded that the focus on risks was still very dominant and the idea of 'it takes a village' not yet realized. Informal and formal support for families was not widely available. This is very much at the heart of the discussion at this moment, enhanced by

the COVID-19 pandemic, but also because of the enormous rise in costs of the formal care system. There is also an indication that parents should be better supported, in order to create better outcomes for children. The CRC has certainly supported the realization that children are not an appendix of their parents but citizens in their own right. However, also parents are not just the vehicle to reach better outcomes for children. Their wellbeing has to be looked at as well.

But we should also realise that this debate is taking place in the context of a solid set of provisions and laws that protect and provide for families.

(i) *What are the pressing policy, practice and research challenges impeding developments?*  
\*

The reform of the care system and dealing with the effects on children and families post pandemic will be dominating our agenda for the coming years.

(ii) *What are the pressing gaps in provision?* \*

The Netherlands has very good programmes and professionals working in the domain of parenting support, but they are still very scattered and geared at identifying risks. Much knowledge has been gathered on what works in parenting support, as well as what works for the specific needs of children; e.g. with disabilities or other risks. Programmes for expecting parents have also been implemented. More work is required to provide a better environment for families in which parents can meet and support each other towards providing better outcomes for their children. There is also a need for general and universal formal and informal support, and a normalization of assistance seeking and sharing parenting issues; a positive parenting environment with equal partnerships between both parents and providers.

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## 18 NORTH MACEDONIA - National report on family support policy & provision

**Makedonka Radulovic**

### 18.1 Trends and issues related to demography

#### *(i) Fertility rates*

The current fertility rate for North Macedonia in 2020 is 1.486 births. The total fertility rate during the last decade is slowly decreasing. This number indicates a Macedonian position in the group of countries where fertility is below the level of replacement. The reasons for such a situation are complex: cultural, demographic, economic, and health-related factors (Table 1).

Table 1. *Fertility rates*

Year	Fertility rate
2010	1.56
2011	1.46
2012	1.51
2013	1.49
2014	1.52
2015	1.50
2016	1.50
2017	1.43
2018	1.42

Note. Eurostat Database 2020

*(ii) Families with children by number of children*

There are no available data for this question in the provided Excel Sheet. In North Macedonia, households with two children are the most frequent households with children. The Republic of North Macedonia completed its last census in 2002; after this period no official statistics are available.

*(iii) Percentage of the population from 0 to 19*

Percentage of the population from 0-19 is decreasing. This is happening due to the lower birth rate. Fewer children and negative net migration are resulting in a decreasing population. Total fertility rates typically decrease as incomes rise, education rates rise, and infant mortality decreases. Couples get married and start having children later, and have fewer children overall. Similarly, slowing population growth and increasing life expectancies will result in an aging population (Table 2).

Table 2. *Population 19 years and under*

Year	%
2010	25.2
2011	24.8
2012	24.3
2013	23.9
2014	23.5
2015	23.2
2016	22.9
2017	22.6
2018	22.4

2019

22.1

Note. Eurostat Database 2020

*(iv) Percentage of population over working (retiring) age*

The percentage of the population over 65 years is increasing in the Republic of North Macedonia. From 2010 to 2019, we have 2.5 more people of this age group. This implies that life expectancy is longer, and that the Macedonian population is older. Macedonia is no exception to the aging trend: the percentage of elderly to working age is expected to increase from 20 percent in 2018 to 56 percent in 2100 (Table 3).

Table 3. *Population over working age*

Year	%
2010	11.6
2011	11.7
2012	11.8
2013	12.0
2014	12.4
2015	12.7
2016	13.0
2017	13.3
2018	13.7
2019	14.1

Note. Eurostat Database 202

*(v) Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities*

The Republic of North Macedonia is a social, multi-ethnic, and multi-confessional state. The population of the Republic of North Macedonia is diverse. At the beginning of the 21st century, nearly two-thirds of the population identified themselves as Macedonians. Albanians are the largest and most important minority in the Republic of North Macedonia. According to the 2002 census, they made up about one-fourth of the population. The Albanians—most of whom trace their descent to the ancient Illyrians—are concentrated in the northwestern part of the country, near the borders with Albania and Kosovo. Albanians form majorities in some 16 of North Macedonia's 80 municipalities. Other much smaller minorities (constituting less than 5 percent of the population each) include the Turks, Roma, Serbs, Bosniaks, and Vlachs (Aromani) (*North Macedonia, State Statistical Office, 2004*). The Turkish minority is mostly scattered across central and western North Macedonia, a legacy of the 500-year rule of the Ottoman Empire. The majority of Vlachs, who speak a language closely related to Romanian, live in the old mountain city of Kruševo. Religious affiliation is a particularly important subject in North Macedonia because it is so closely tied to ethnic and national identity. With the exception of Bosniaks, the majority of Slavic speakers living in the region of Macedonia are Orthodox Christian. Turks, and the great majority of both Albanians and Roma are Muslims. Altogether, about one-third of the population is of the Islamic faith. Socially excluded and vulnerable groups are unemployed people; single-parent families; street children and their parents; victims of family violence and homeless people. Roma people are the group in major social risk in North Macedonia. The phenomena of homeless people, street children, and housing deprivation are the most visible forms of poverty and social exclusion in North Macedonia (Marinakou, 2017).

*(vi) Migration patterns*

Historically, the Balkans have experienced high rates of natural increase in population. The rate declined remarkably in the 20th century in response to industrialization and urbanization. The rate of natural increase in North Macedonia at the end of the first decade of the 21st century was about three-fifths less than it had been in the mid-1990s. Birth rates for the same period declined relatively steadily by about one-fifth, to about three-fifths of the world average. Movement from rural to urban areas in North Macedonia in the early 21st century was much more common than the reverse. Emigration to other parts of Europe, as well as to North America and Australia, has also had a significant influence on demographic trends in North Macedonia. North Macedonia immigration statistics for 2015 was 130,730.00, a 0.79% increase from 2010. Macedonians have a long tradition of migration. Although the most popular destinations are recognized, the number of emigrants living abroad is unknown. The population census

conducted in 1994 provided 159,548 citizens of Macedonia staying abroad. This census had some weaknesses. It was conducted in 23 countries only (Danforth, 2020).

It could not be conducted in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, thus only an insignificant number of persons from this country were covered. The next census conducted in 2002 applied different methodologies. Based on interviews with the households it brings the amount of 22,995 people staying abroad up to one year and another 12,128 staying longer. These data measure different things and are not comparable with the previous census results. However, it is estimated that 258.000 people moved out of Macedonia in the decade between 2008 and 2018. An increase in emigration was recorded in 2015, the first year of the ongoing political crisis, and 2018 was a record year with 33.337 recorded emigrants (Markiewicz, 2006).

## **18.2 Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles and children's living arrangements**

### *(i) Family household types*

The development of the family in Macedonia in the past century was marked by very expressive patriarchal forms and contents. As a result of the various external and internal factors affecting its existence, the family in Macedonia undergoes gradual transformations but many elements maintain the patriarchal aspect to this day. A characteristic form of the family in the Republic of Macedonia before the transition process was the patriarchal family, which completely realized the main functions as a basic economic unit. Although the Macedonian family still demonstrates patriarchal elements, it gradually transforms into a modern family under the impact of the shifts.

According to Radulovic (2017), significant characteristic factors of the family organization and the family relations in Macedonia are the diverse ethnicity and religion of the population, the different types of settlements, agricultural development, industrial development, vocational education, scholastic formation, and habits and traditions. It all contributes towards a parallel existence of various forms of family life (family communities, under-age partners marriages, prejudice over authority of the mother and father) and all forms of the egalitarian, modern family, present in the city and industrial centres. In the recent years Macedonian average household size is 3.7 members, typical for nuclear families (parents with their children) (Table 4).

Table 4. *Average household size*

Year	%
2011	3.7
2012	3.7
2013	3.7
2014	3.7
2015	3.7
2016	3.7
2017	3.7
2018	3.7

Note. Eurostat Database 2020

*(ii) Marriage and divorce rates*

The number of marriages is decreasing, whilst the number of divorces slowly increased compared to the previous years (Table 5, 6). The contrast in numbers is significant when compared to data from the first census of 1994 with more recent data. In the last decades, the number of marriages has decreased from 15.736 in 1994 to 13 814 in 2019, whilst the number of divorces has augmented from 710 in 1995 to 1 990 in 2019 (North Macedonia State Statistical Office, 2020). Some of the factors for such trends are: alterations of ethical and moral standards, a general predominance of individualism, the emancipation of women, and reduced influence of religion. Furthermore, the increased average age at first marriage, extended studies, postponed employment (due to studies or unemployment), and unresolved housing.

Table 5. *Crude marriage rate*

Year	%
2010	6.9
2011	6.2
2012	6.8
2013	6.8
2014	6.7
2015	6.8
2016	6.4
2017	6.4
2018	6.5

Note. Eurostat Database 2020

Table 6. *Crude divorce rate*

Year	%
2010	0.8
2011	0.9
2012	0.9
2013	1
2014	1.1

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2015	1
2016	1
2017	1
2018	0.8

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Note. Eurostat Database 2020

### *(iii) Lone parent families*

There is still no single legal definition of this term in our legislation. Our society, which is constantly changing the forms and functioning of everyday life, hardly allows a criterion to be established based on which a person or family will receive this status. According to this, it is difficult to come up with a general definition that will cover all the elements for single-parent families. The percentage of mothers with children in the Republic of Macedonia is 7% while fathers with children are 2%. The total percentage of these types of families (which do not bear a special name, e.g., single families / single-family families), according to the Statistical Office (2020) is 9%.

### *(iv) New family forms such as same-sex couple households*

According to the Family Law of the Republic of Macedonia (2014), a de facto partnership or cohabitation is a community in which a man and a woman live at least one year without getting married. Macedonian extramarital communities enjoy the same rights of married couples as far as the right to mutual economic support and property rights are concerned, including legal protection against domestic violence. The Republic of Macedonia does not officially recognize any kind of same sex community, either marital or extra marital.

### *(v) Family structures and changes across social groups*

Macedonia is facing a long period of political and economic transition which has additionally influenced the family structure and the society in general. The economic instability of the past two decades has caused increased labour migration in the European Union and overseas, resulting with an augmented number of families with at least one member of the household abroad. Moreover, with the introduction of the free market economy, the participation of women in the labour market led to further transformation of family roles. In fact, there is an ongoing

debate on whether the increased economic emancipation of women in Macedonia is one of the main reasons for postponing marriage and birth. Political, economic and social changes shape and transform family models as well. Macedonia has started to gradually abandon the patriarchal and extended family models, and substitute them primarily with nuclear families, but also with single-parent families and reconstituted family models, mainly due to the increased divorce rate. The nuclear family model, on the other hand, is undergoing transformations by itself. In fact, in the past decade, traditional marriage appears to be challenged by the increased number of couples who choose to avoid the commitments of marital communities. Thus, following the example of Western societies, Macedonia has reduced the legal difference between cohabitation and marriage (Avirovic & Radulovic, 2016).

*(vi) Children and youth living in institutions*

Children and youth beneficiaries of social protection are divided into several categories such as: children without parents and parental care; children with upbringing and social problems; and neglected children and children with disabilities in their development. Institutions for accommodation of children and youth without parents and parental care are the following: Institution for Babies and Small Children - Bitola that takes in children from 0-3 years of age and the Institution for Children and Youth "11th October"- Skopje, that provides care for children from the age of 3 to 18 years. Beside these public institutions, in 2002 the first private institution for children without parents or parental care, SOS Children's village, was opened in Skopje (First children's embassy in the world-Megjasi, 2009).

*(vii) Children in out-of-home care such as foster care*

As an alternative form of fostering in the Republic of North Macedonia there are 140 foster families in which 219 children without parents and parental care are accommodated, and at the same time 31 potential foster families are registered. (the information is from April 2009; data provided from Institution for Social activities of Macedonia). Foster families in the cities are as follows: 1 Skopje - 43; 2 Prilep – 32; 3 Makedonski Brod – 18; 4 Krushevo – 11; 5 Veles – 9; 6 Kochani – 7; 7 Bitola – 7; 8 Kumanovo – 5; 9 Gostivar – 4; 10 Strumica – 1; 11 Probishtip – 1; 12 Kratovo – 2 (Total 140). Foster families receive modest assistance from the MoLSP and the current foster care system is considered to offer good prospects for children who would otherwise be without adequate care. However, foster care in Macedonia still lacks a clear framework for accreditation and, most importantly, quality control. In Macedonia there are two institutions for accommodation of children and youth with social upbringing and behavioural problems, the Institution for Care and Upbringing "25th May"- Skopje, that accommodates children and youth with social upbringing problems from the age range of 7-18 years for both

males and females, and the Institution "Ranka Milanovic" - Skopje that accommodates neglected male children and youth aged 10 -18 (UNICEF, 2008).

*(viii) Home-based support*

According to the Social protection law article 74 (2019), home services can be provided. Services for providing assistance and care in the home of a person with temporary or permanently reduced functional capacity, are as follows:

-Assistance and home care, and personal assistance.

The newest governmental initiative providing home-based support is the National Deinstitutionalization Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia for 2018–2027, 'Timjanik', presents the vision, objectives and strategic approach of the Government, as well as actions to be advanced in the implementation of the transition from institutional care towards a system of social care in the family and community supported by social services.

**18.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare**

*(i) Poverty rates*

Poverty rates in North Macedonia are showing decreasing trends in the last decade, including both indicators: total population at risk of poverty, and total population at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

(Total population at the risk of poverty rate (cut-off point: 60% of median equivalized income after social transfers)

Table 7. *Poverty rates*

Year	%
2010	27
2011	26.8
2012	26.2
2013	24.2
2014	22.1

2015	21.5
2016	21.9
2017	22.2
2018	21.9

Note. Eurostat Database 2020

(People at risk of poverty or social exclusion)

Table 8. *Poverty rates*

Year	%
2010	49.9
2011	53.6
2012	53.5
2013	50.5
2014	46.9
2015	46.1
2016	46.1
2017	47.2
2018	45.9

Note. Eurostat Database 2020

(ii) *Employment/unemployment rates*

The total percentage of people in employment is increasing from 43.5 in 2010 to 51.7 in 2018 (Table 7). The Republic of North Macedonia since its independence is suffering from high rate of unemployment. Unfortunately, the most vulnerable category are young people. The rate of youth unemployment since the independence of North Macedonia (1991) was constantly over 50% until 2015, when for the first time it dropped below 50%, but we still have a high rate of youth unemployment, above 45% (more about this in the next chapter). According to the State Statistical Office data (2019), in the second quarter of 2019, the active population in the Republic of North Macedonia is 962,463 persons, out of which 794,283 are employed and 168,180 unemployed. The activity rate in this period is 57.1, the employment rate is 47.1, while the unemployment rate is 17.5. With the aim to achieve a higher employability of young people, the Government, in recent years, has been working on new measures through a combination of employment, education, and social assistance policies (more in the next chapters).

(Total employment (15-64 years))

Table 8. *Employment rate*

Year	%
2010	43.5
2011	43.9
2012	44
2013	46.1
2014	46.9
2015	47.8
2016	49.1
2017	50.5
2018	51.7

Note. Eurostat Database 2020

*(iii) Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage related to gender, age, ethnicity, migrant status, and other social dimensions*

North Macedonia has committed to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and aligned its legislation to achieving *de jure* and *de facto* gender equality. North Macedonia has adopted several laws and mechanisms to advance gender equality. The Law on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men obliges public institutions to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men and to integrate gender into their policies, strategies and budgets through specific measures to reduce gender inequality (Ministry of labor and social policy, 2017).

Despite significant legal changes, gender gaps and inequalities continue across all levels.

Significant discrepancies exist between legal frameworks and their implementation, especially in rural areas. Gender gaps appear in labour-market activity, with high inactivity among rural and ethnic minority women. There is a 27 percentage-point gap in labour-force participation between women and men. A traditional gender division of work exists in which men spend more time on paid work and women spend more time performing domestic activities. Gender roles play a part in occupational segregation. Women in rural agriculture work longer hours than men, but a larger percentage of women's work is unpaid (Sproule, Dimitrovska, et al., 2019).

Women often work in the informal sector after having children; this labour does not contribute to their pension or healthcare. There is very strong gender discrimination in terms of vertical distribution of jobs, as women are more likely to be in low-paid or even unpaid family jobs than men. The more traditional the community to which they belong, the more striking is the vertical distribution of job places among men and women (Kazandziska, Risteska, et al., 2018).

There is no institution that deals exclusively with disputes relating to equal remuneration. Instead, cases must be brought to the attention institutions dealing with broader discrimination and equal employment opportunities. There are separate programmes for promoting gender equality and equal opportunities for women and men, and national employment programmes that contain measures concerning gender-based discrimination.

There is a gender imbalance in decision-making bodies in political parties. There is a visible gap in women's participation in political-party management and decision-making. Although women hold 38 percent of parliamentary seats and 16 percent of ministerial ones, this standing is facilitated by a gender quota that does not yet assist Roma or Turkish women. Women participate less in local policy agenda setting and decision-making, primarily due to their shortage of time, and a lack of trust that their involvement would result in change.

Even when represented, women struggle to voice their specific needs in policy debates. There are challenges with the policies and planning that respond to gender-specific needs.

Participation of Roma and Albanian women in local-level decision-making, public-sector employment, education (especially for Roma women), and the formal labour market remains low. An estimated 8.5 percent of women in rural areas are members of a political party. There are few instances of women holding leadership positions at the local level, and women effectively are excluded from policymaking and planning processes. While gender-responsive budgeting will be compulsory with the new Organic Law on Budgeting, the capacity and understanding to carry out gender-responsive budgeting in policy and budgets is lacking. At the governmental level, there is a lack of awareness regarding gender inequality, as it is not prioritized in efforts to address social cohesion. Although a cultural shift is emerging, traditional gender norms are more prevalent among Roma and Albanian populations—especially in rural areas—making those groups particularly vulnerable. Roma girls and women are subject to early marriage, have the lowest rates of school attendance, and are generally marginalized in the political, social, and economic spheres.

Young people comprise the majority of external and internal migrants, and they are changing the demographics of the country's regions by migrating from rural to urban areas and abroad. Emigration from rural to urban areas has increased the population in cities, especially in the capital, leaving many rural areas, especially in the Southeast region, with few young people. Recent surveys also suggest that many young people (as many as 77 percent) are considering leaving the country, primarily to migrate to European Union member states (58 percent). The main reason is poor quality of life: inadequate or underpaid work, poor working conditions, political and economic uncertainty, a poor education system, and discrimination. Consequently, many young people suffer from poor mental health and few mental-health services are available to support them.

Youth policy and youth infrastructure (such as youth centres, social content, and activities) are lacking. Employment rates among young rural women beginning at 20 years old divert negatively from those of urban women due to their domestic responsibilities (Centre for Research and Policy Making, 2012).

*(iv) Patterns of education disadvantage*

In the Republic of North Macedonia there is a lack of facilities at all levels of education. Hence, the problem of their accessibility appears, especially at the preschool level, and at the transfer from lower primary to upper primary and from primary to secondary education. In rural/mountain areas where schools are not located in every village and children live far away from the schools they should attend, the local education authorities should arrange local transportation with a financial help from the part of the state. In the total intake percentage of children enrolled in pre-school education in the Republic of North Macedonia, those from disadvantaged groups (from poor areas and families, minority groups, mentally and physically handicapped children) are least included in the preschool education and least challenged and prepared for inclusion in the compulsory school system. According to UNICEF's (2019) global report 176 million pre-school aged children are not enrolled in pre-primary education, and calls on governments around the world to increase investment to ensure every child is given the best start in life. In North Macedonia where almost 41,000 children – around 61 per cent of pre-primary-aged [3-6 years] children – are not enrolled in pre-primary education, the Government has committed to reforms to improve access and quality of pre-school. Students leaving compulsory education are mostly from the Roma ethnic group and from the poor families in rural and mountain regions.

Besides, recent studies indicate that 28 to 45 percent of youth aged 15 to 29 do not feel their education prepared them for employment. Seventeen percent stated that applied, practical, or vocational training would have better prepared them to meet labour-market demand, while 16 percent each cited foreign language and other training (which included vocational and skilled trades, sports, sciences, continued studies, and arts).

In addition, many of the young people lucky enough to be employed, work less hours than they want, hold insecure jobs, are overqualified, underpaid, hold temporary positions or are without a written contract – indicating a mismatch in skills and in supply/demand on the labour market.

*(v) Major social welfare trends such as disadvantage risks, welfare benefit receipt levels*

Employment is considered a primary pathway to individual independence and self-efficacy, as well as the best way to combat poverty and social exclusion. However, some categories of citizens face difficulty in accessing employment for different reasons; either temporary or for a prolonged period of time. The role of the social assistance is to provide for the material existence of those citizens and to preserve their living standard to a certain level, affordable and achievable by the state. Even among the workers who manage to find a job, there are some who will be employed at very low wages, working few hours, on temporary contracts, etc., hence

still living in poverty (so called, working poor). Similar to most European countries, North Macedonia has a comprehensive system for social security which comprises: a) contributory benefits (such as pension and disability insurance), b) passive and active labor-market programmes, and c) social assistance programmes for protecting income and consumption of the poor (Petreski, & Mojsoska-Blazevski, 2017). Passive policies are represented by the contribution-based unemployment benefit which is conditional on previous work history. The social assistance system in Macedonia can be characterized as categorical rather than universal, given that it guarantees minimum resources/income to specific subgroups of population, such as unemployed, disabled, etc. In addition, the system is fragmented, consisting of many types of programs rather than having a single, comprehensive program. In total, there are 16 separate benefit schemes that are defined by laws as “entitlements” or “rights” and two social programs. Of those, 11 are social and five are child protection benefits (Ministry of labour and social policy, 2019).

The nexus for social care provision in the community is often the Centre for Social Work. Currently, Centres for Social Work are particularly underrepresented in rural areas where they are needed most. Existing Centres and Social Workers are sometimes overwhelmed with more cases than they can possibly manage.

#### *(vi) Housing problems*

Poverty in Macedonia is such that many families live in overcrowded homes together with parents or grandparents and cannot afford new apartments. According to Hopkins’s (2018) review in the Financial Times, residential energy consumption in North Macedonia is high, unaffordable, environmentally degrading, and inefficient. With 28 per cent of the population unemployed, and 20 per cent living in poverty, many of the Macedonians who remain struggle to pay their bills.

Traditional gender norms and limitations on women’s freedom of movement outside the home result in some women not being in a position to learn new skills (such as teaching, information technology, hairdressing, and embroidery).

There is also a significant gender gap in ownership and control over property and assets. Traditionally, property is registered in the man’s name. Only 28 percent of women own property and rural women own even less. Fifty percent of women landowners are not active in the decision-making process on activities related to land, and fewer than 10 percent of women have a leading role in decision-making activities related to land. Women’s lack of owning assets contributes to their economic vulnerability (USAID, 2019).

In the Roma community there are a lot of problems. The area is excessively polluted, and the streets are not adequate. Additionally, there is wastewater that is passing through the streets. With the current level of poverty in Macedonia, the cost of legalizing homes is way beyond what many Roma can afford, and the legal process far too daunting. It is a problem faced by around 300,000 people in this country; almost 15% of the population (AECOM International Development Europe SL, 2019).

*Summary: The broader socio-economic context and trends which influences children's, parental and family circumstances and environments:*

Low motivation of teachers is among the factors that contribute to the low quality of education. In addition, most of teachers lack up-to-date competencies and resources to ensure that all children fully realize their right to quality education. This directly influences the quality of teaching, which in turn decreases the knowledge and skills acquired by children and lowers their employment opportunities.

There are important disparities between ethnic groups in terms of mother's education and wealth quintiles. In Roma communities, only 72 per cent of children of pre-school age are on track in the areas of social emotional development. Overall, there is a shortage of affordable and accessible early education options for preschool children, particularly in rural areas. Patterns of inequality and imbalance often correlate with socioeconomic status and ethnicity, and children most in need of educational services are least likely to receive them. This is both unjust and an ineffective use of resources, as early childhood education yields most returns when targeting poor children. The current primary function of the state kindergartens is childcare rather than education or development. Most kindergartens give preferential placement to working couples that can afford the fees. In effect, this means that wealthier families benefit more from state supported services than poorer ones. While access to early childhood development services doubled from 11 per cent in 2015 to 22 per cent in 2019, children from the richest families and children living in urban areas increasingly benefit from them more than the poor – by a margin of 56 per cent in 2019, up from 24 per cent in 2015. The lack of understanding of children's early development needs is a major barrier to meeting development goals. Prioritization of care over education in the national kindergarten system is reflected in the fact that kindergartens still fall under the mandate of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy rather than the Ministry of Education (Waljee, Wood, et al., 2015). Besides cost, other underlying causes of unequal access include distance, the lack of appropriate accessible facilities, discriminatory attitudes, and preferential practices that constrain enrolment opportunities. Children with disabilities and Roma and Albanian children, face discrimination from parents and other children when they enrol. Meanwhile, an obstacle to the greater inclusion of children with

disabilities in the preschool and school system is the lack of personnel qualified to work with them.

There is also a pervasive social stigma against people seeking help from Centres for Social work – an embarrassment about neighbours finding out that a person is seeking assistance. This, in combination with low parental awareness about the role and the potential assistance and support that can be received through the Centres for Social Work, contributes to families who might benefit from assistance not reaching out to Centres and Social Workers for support. Also, the quality of child allowance and cash benefits are inadequate, basically leaving many children at risk of inter-generational poverty or social exclusion.

#### **18.4 The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions and actors' which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision**

*(i) Membership to the EU;*

NO

*(ii) Relationship with the European Union*

The Republic of North Macedonia's application for EU membership was submitted on 22 March 2004. The Commission delivered a positive opinion on 9 November 2005. The European Council awarded the country candidate status in December 2005. The European Commission first recommended to open accession negotiations with the Republic of North Macedonia in October 2009. In 2015 and 2016, the recommendation was made conditional on the continued implementation of the Pržino agreement and substantial progress in the implementation of the "Urgent Reform Priorities".

In June 2018, the Council adopted conclusions in which it agreed to respond positively to the progress made by the Republic of North Macedonia and set out the path towards opening accession negotiations in June 2019, depending on progress made in certain key areas, such as judicial reform, intelligence and security services reform and public administration reform. On 24 March 2020, ministers for European affairs gave their political agreement to the opening of accession negotiations with Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia. On 25 March, the conclusions on enlargement and stabilization and association process were formally adopted by written procedure. The members of the European Council endorsed the conclusions on 26 March, 2020 (Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2020).

*(iii) Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy*

The government has indicated support for family-friendly policy.

**Frameworks** - The Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia (1991) contains several provisions regarding the family for example - The Republic provides particular care and protection for the family. The legal relations in marriage, the family and cohabitation are regulated by law. Parents have the right and duty to provide for the nurturing and education of their children (article 40). Children are responsible for the care of their old and infirm parents. The Republic provides particular protection for parentless children and children without parental care. Law on Family of 1992 - This law regulates the marriage and family, the relationships in the marriage and family, certain forms, special protection of the family, adoption, guardianship, sustenance, as well as the court procedure in marriage and family suits. According to the law the family is a living community of parents and children as well as other relatives, provided they live in a common household. Also, the family shall come into existence with the birth of children and adoption. The Republic of North Macedonia provides special protection for the family, maternity, children, minor children, children without parents and unaccompanied children. The Republic shall establish and provide scientific, economic, and social conditions for family planning and free and responsible parenthood. Also, there are Law on Protection of Children (2018), Law on social protection etc.

**Institutions:** Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Centre for Social Work, Social protection institutions, Institute for Social Activities, Marriage and Family Counseling Centre, The Department for Violence and Injury Control and Prevention.

Paid maternity leave, paid paternity leave and parental leave, maternal and child health care, health protection at the workplace for pregnant and nursing workers, adequate facilities for breastfeeding and childcare, a child-care system, social security benefits, such as family and child allowances, and tax relief measures (Labour Relations Law Act, 2016).

Rape, including spousal rape, is illegal, as is domestic violence, which remains common; both are infrequently reported. The government and some NGOs provide services to victims of domestic violence.

A 2017 ruling by the Administrative Court allowed people to change their gender in the country's official registry.

*(iv) Influential lobbying groups*

There are two lobbying groups. The first one is with conservative views that advocate for a nuclear family, legally married, with a hierarchy. On the other hand, the second one is more focused on free relationships, extramarital life, one-parent family, and same-sex marriages.

*(v) Influential policy/research networks*

**National network to end violence against women and domestic violence** - formed on December 7, 2010, by twenty CSOs that work on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. They functioned as a non-formal network until December 16, 2011, when they officially registered as a legal entity. Their mission is to achieve coordinated action of CSOs towards advancing policies and practices in combating violence against women and domestic violence. The network aims for recognition of women's human rights and their promotion in the Republic of Macedonia (National network to end violence against women and domestic violence, 2020).

**Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women** - non-governmental Organization. **ESE** develops and helps women's and civic leadership in the development and implementation of human rights and social justice in Macedonian society.

**Health Education and Research Association (H.E.R.A.)** - Leads a citizen action and encourages social change, improved sexual and reproductive health education and services, especially for the marginalized communities. The First Family Centre established in 2013 in Skopje as a specialized counselling centre for support and prevention against domestic violence is an example of good cooperation between the civil sector, local government, and business sector, providing free, confidential, and high-quality counselling and psychotherapy services for victims and perpetrators of domestic violence.

**The Department for Violence and Injury Control and Prevention** was established within the Institute of Public Health in 2004 as a lead agency for violence prevention in the health sector, and it was later in 2012 inaugurated as the Safe Community Affiliate Support Centre.

The first **shelter centre** was opened in 2004 in Skopje for the protection of victims of domestic violence. The process was followed by the opening of five more centres in the country and a national SOS line financed by the Government. Training of social workers and health professionals was also conducted (Galevska, Misev, et al., 2010).

**Crisis Center "Hope"** - NGO - is sustainable and specialized association for prevention and protection from violence against women and domestic violence. The association offers a comprehensive suite of support services with adequate quality, has database and expertise on advocacy aimed at promotion of laws and policies.

**Florence Nightingale – Kumanovo** is a non-governmental multi-ethnic association that works on prevention of domestic violence, protection of women and children, provides legal assistance, and lobbies and represents victims of domestic violence before the competent

institutions in the Republic of North Macedonia, in order to achieve full gender equality in the society.

*(vi) The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support*

There is a remarkable discrepancy in the way families are treated in the policymaking process in N. Macedonia compared to other domains such as economy, corruption, Euro-Atlantic integration etc. In fact, family policy is usually considered a sub-topic under social policy. However, as a candidate country to the EU, in the past decade N. Macedonia had to undergo a process of legal harmonization of family policies and improve several legal acts. Nevertheless, the enactment of the legal system does not always coincide with the factual situation on the ground, and despite past governmental efforts in the area of legal harmonization, there are several gaps that have to be fulfilled and policies to be improved in order to achieve efficient family support institutions at the European level.

*(vii) The democratic system and main political parties; (unitary vs federal state structures; centralized vs decentralized structures)*

N. Macedonia has a multi-party system, and the main political players are divided into two ethnic blocs: Macedonian and Albanian. The current main parties in the Parliament are two major ethnic Macedonian parties: VMRO-DPMNE (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity) with a right-wing populism ideology, SDSM (Social Democratic Union of Macedonia) with social liberalism ideology; and three major Albanian parties: DUI (Democratic Union for Integration), BESA (Besa Movement) and AA (Alliance for Albanians), all with Albanian minority interest. Traditionally, a Macedonian party forms the government with the winning party from the Albanian bloc. In addition, there are smaller ethnic parties, minor Macedonian parties and few multi-ethnic parties.

*(viii) The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular (e.g., Ministry roles, national vs local/regional government roles)*

The main institutional framework for family support in N. Macedonia on national level is largely within the competencies of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, followed by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Health. The main national institutions which act on local level include: the Public Centre for Intermunicipal Centre for social work in Skopje, Public Centres for Social Work in every city, Counselling Departments and Shelters for family violence victims. Other relevant family support governmental organization on national level are: National Council for Gender Equality, Service for people with mental and psychological disabilities, Coordinative body within the Government of N. Macedonia for the implementation of the

Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Department for marriage and family violence etc.

*(vii) The ways in and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policymaking and reviews*

Besides formal officials (ministers, advisors, members of the Parliament etc.) not many professionals are included in the policymaking of family support in N. Macedonia. Policymakers rarely turn to family data or family professionals to make evidence-based decisions. Moreover, public debates and research funding are limited, thus resulting with a challenging communication and cooperation between policymakers and professionals. As far as parents/families, children and young people are concerned, their opinion is even less considered and limited to communication with institutions on local level (i.e., families and schools). We consider that the degree of inclusion of professionals and families in the policymaking process (planning and developmental stages) is somewhat low and inadequate (Radulovic & Avirovic, 2018).

### **18.5 List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic that have been launched since the year 2000. For each policy document indicate**

- Most important policy documents since 2000 are:

Legal framework:

- ❖ Child protection Law (num. 98/2000, last change was made on 275/2015)
- ❖ Social protection Law (num. 104/2019)
- ❖ Family law (80/1990, last change was made on 150/2015)
- ❖ Law on prevention and protection of domestic violence (138/2014, last change was made on 150/2015)
- ❖ Law on elementary education (161/2019)
- ❖ Law on the Ombudsman (35/2018)
- ❖ Law on Health protection (42/2012, last change was made on 37/2016)
- Strategic plans and political development documents:
  - ❖ Nacional strategy (2020-2025) and Action plan (2020-2022) for prevention and protection of children from violence

- ❖ Nacional strategy for deinstitutionalization in Republic of Macedonia 2018-2027 “Timjanik”
- ❖ Nacional health strategy in Republic of Macedonia 2020: “Safe, effective and fair health care system”
- ❖ Nacional strategy for equalization of the rights of persons with disabilities (2010-2018)
- ❖ Nacional action plan for children rights 2012-2015
- ❖ Action plan for employment of young people (2015, 2016-2020)
- ❖ Annual program for development activity for children protection
- ❖ Program for realization of social protection for 2018
- ❖ Social protection development program 2011-2021
- ❖ Program for conditional cash transfers for secondary students for the academic year
- ❖ Program for early learning and development (46/2014)
- ❖ Strategy for Roma people in Republic of Macedonia 2017-2020

*(i) Whether participation of families and young people has been mentioned in the document*

- Participation of children and families:
  - ❖ Child protection Law (num. 98/2000, last change was made on 275/2015)
  - ❖ Law on elementary education (161/2019)
  - ❖ Nacional strategy (2020-2025) and Action plan (2020-2022) for prevention and protection of children from violence
  - ❖ Nacional strategy for equalization of the rights of persons with disabilities (2010-2018)
  - ❖ Nacional action plan for children rights 2012-2015
  - ❖ Program for early learning and development (46/2014)
  - ❖ Annual program for development activity for children protection
- Participation of young people and families:

- ❖ Social protection Law (num. 104/2019)
- ❖ Social protection development program 2011-2021
- ❖ Program for realization of social protection for 2018
- ❖ Nacional strategy for deinstitutionalization in Republic of Macedonia 2018-2027 “Timjanik”
- ❖ Action plan for employment of young people (2015, 2016-2020)
- ❖ Program for conditional cash transfers for secondary students for the academic year
- Participation of families in general:
  - ❖ Family law (80/1990, last change was made on 150/2015)
  - ❖ Law on prevention and protection of domestic violence (138/2014, last change was made on 150/2015)
  - ❖ Law on Health protection (42/2012, last change was made on 37/2016)
  - ❖ Law on the Ombudsman (35/2018)
  - ❖ Nacional health strategy in Republic of Macedonia 2020: “Safe, effective and fair health care system”.
  - ❖ Strategy for Roma people in Republic of Macedonia 2017-2020

*(ii) The extent to which such participation has been implemented*

- Participation of children and families:
  - ❖ Child protection Law (num. 98/2000, last change was made on 275/2015) / Nacional action plan for children rights 2012-2015

Continuous cash benefits are provided by this law: allowance for children, allowance for disabled children, allowance for new-born child, and parent allowance for child.

This law defines the work of preschool institutions as forms of education for children. According to the State Statistical Office (2019), in 2019 there were 103 pre-school institutions and centres for early development who were taking care of 39,094 children (around 30% of all preschool children), which is an increase of 1.3% compared to 2018.

- ❖ Law on elementary education (161/2019)

The law provides quality and free education for every child. In September 2019/2020 there were 981 primary schools and 187,240 students; a decrease of 0.5% compared to the previous school year (State Statistical Office, 2020).

For the first time this law is very sensitive to children with a disability. It provides inclusive education for every child with disability through Resource Centres. Now and in the next two years, special schools will be in the process of transformation into the Resource Centres. In 2019/20 there were 732 students with disabilities in special schools.

❖ National strategy for equalization of the rights of persons with disabilities (2010-2018)

This National strategy ensures greater participation of persons with disabilities in the educational process, better social inclusion, and inclusion in the labour market. We are few steps forward, but despite existing legislation and policies, research shows that discrimination based on mental and physical disability is a widespread phenomenon in the country.

❖ Annual program for development activity for children protection

These programs provide a range of activities to stimulate the child's development. The government has taken measures to increase the resources and number of places in preschool institutions by investing in preschool infrastructure and high-quality training for preschool teachers. It is planned to implement a compulsory year of preschool education for children aged 5-6 in order to ensure that children are well-prepared before starting primary school (UNICEF, 2020).

• Participation of young people and families:

❖ Social protection Law (num. 104/2019)

The payment of the social allowance has now been streamlined and there has been significant progress in community-based care and protection resources over the past few years. Changes have also been made in job descriptions and internships, but the system of social work centres is still overloaded and staff morale is considered to be low. The new law includes other financial rights integrated into the social services offered. There is still insufficient research on the impact of the package of benefits and administrative measures on family poverty, but the benefits are aimed for people with disabilities, including children and families.

❖ National strategy for deinstitutionalization in the Republic of Macedonia 2018-2027  
“Timjanik”

The National Deinstitutionalization Strategy (2018-2027) aims to ensure that no child under the age of 18 is placed in an institution. The number of children in institutions decreased from 182 in 2017 to 43 in 2019, and by March 2019, 384 children were placed in foster families.

❖ Action plan for employment of young people (2015, 2016-2020)

Action plan for employment of young people (2015) offered: self-employment grants, internship, training from well-known employer, employment subsidy, training for advanced IT skills and training for deficient occupations.

Main benefits from action plan (2015) are: the number of dropout young people (15-24) decreased by 15.3 percent; nearly 57 percent of young unemployed people who attended one of the training programs were employed one year after completing the program; around 2,500 young people have gained access to loans and grants for self-employment.

There are no available analyses on an Action plan for employment of young people (2016-2020), but according to the plan, the target for interventions until the end of 2020 are 42% of the young population (aged 15 to 29) and according to the SSO, the employment rate of young people (age 15-24) in 2019 was 46.9, and 48.1 in 2020.

❖ Program for conditional cash transfers for secondary students for the academic year

This program aims for better access and quality of secondary education for students from socially vulnerable categories. This program has been active since 2009.

• Participation of families in general:

❖ Family law (80/1990, last change was made on 150/2015)

The law, including changes of the law, is implemented through the definition of marriage, marital rights and obligations, parenting, adoption and guardianship, divorce proceedings, mediation.

❖ Law on the prevention and protection of domestic violence (138/2014, last change was made on 150/2015)

Law provides improving the measures for prevention, wide recognition, and improved protection of victims of domestic violence through a coordinated multisectoral approach at national and local level. Conducted activities: raising awareness, prevention of domestic violence, organized institutional support, protection, support and resocialization of the victim.

According to the Macedonian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in 2019 (until October), there were 709 reported cases of domestic violence, of which 610 victims were women.

- ❖ Law on Health protection (42/2012, last change was made on 37/2016) / National health strategy in Republic of Macedonia 2020: “Safe, effective and fair health care system”

This law specifies the right to health care, more specifically regulations on primary, secondary and tertiary health care.

As a statistical indicator, we analyzed the health of pregnant women and mothers. According to the latest estimates, 98.6 percent of pregnant women receive prenatal health care, and 99.9 percent of births are attended by qualified medical staff. However, the perinatal mortality rate in North Macedonia was 16/1000 in 2016; among the highest rates from the countries in the same group; and the infant and child mortality rate below five years is higher than the EU average (Byrne, 2020).

- ❖ Law on the Ombudsman (35/2018)

It is implemented through continuous activities for protection of human rights and freedoms.

- ❖ Strategy for Roma people in Republic of Macedonia 2017-2020

The Roma Decade and national strategies enable greater inclusion of Roma people, improving their quality of life and reducing the risk of poverty. The strategy enables greater involvement of Roma children in the education system, reduction of drop-out children, improvement of the health care system, and inclusion of Roma people in the labour market. This strategy provides educational and health mediators, financial benefits and strengthening public awareness.

## **18.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services**

### *(i) The priorities in child welfare and family policy*

Child protection, from all aspects, is the main priority of many activities and documents: providing a clean and healthy environment (clean air is a significant challenge), protection from child violence, improving the educational quality and greater enrolment across all educational levels (especially preschool level). Priority groups are children from marginalized groups and children with disabilities. In terms of family policy, in the last period we were focused on stimulating the birth rate, as well as activities to improve parenting skills.

Through an analysis of the legal framework, national strategies, and action plans we can conclude that we have a good basis for support of the children, youth and their families. Problems arise during the implementation of those programs.

(ii) *The main types of family provision and support and key features (e.g., different types of cash support (universal and targeted, work-family reconciliation measures and children's/family services, childcare etc.) (no line limit here)*

- Cash support to families in general:
  1. Allowance for parenting (for a third child)
  2. Maternity leave (9 months for single birth, and 12 months for twins)
  3. Participation in the costs for attending preschool state institution
  4. Scholarships for talented elementary and high school students
  5. Scholarships for talented university students
  6. Credits for university students
  
- Cash support for social protection of financially unsecured families:
  1. Child allowance
  2. Guaranteed minimum allowance
  3. Housing allowance
  4. One-time financial allowance
  5. One-time allowance for newborn child
  6. Participation in the costs for care and recreation of children in a public institution for children.
  7. Conditional cash transfers for high school students who attend school regularly
  8. Scholarships for orphans
  
- Cash support for social protection of families with disabled child:
  1. Special allowance
  2. Allowance for disability
  3. Allowance for assistance and care from another person

4. Part-time salary compensation
5. Permanent allowance for a foster family
6. Participation in the costs in some medical treatment

*(iii) The types of funding involved such as state, charity vs private sector providers and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners*

Every year, the state provides self-employment loans for people who will be self-employed in the fields of agriculture, trade, manufacturing, construction, services, etc. In recent years, the state has also focused on stimulated employment of young people in vocational professions.

Due to that, a youth allowance was introduced for employment of young people in production after the completion of secondary education (up to 24 years). The state provides benefits to the employer if it employs people from marginalized groups.

The private sector has a different funding approach. Some companies offer free education/courses in the IT sector with the opportunity to employ the best students.

*(iv) Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations*

There is a special body for monitoring and evaluation, called the Inspection Council. This body consists of 28 inspection services, 45 types of inspectorates, and about 800 inspectors. The inspection services are responsible for controlling the application of over 200 laws and bylaws arising from them. The central administrations of all inspection services are based in Skopje and associates in 30 other cities around the country.

As for the programs and national strategies, the institution responsible for the implementation of the document, after the scheduled time for implementation, conducts an evaluation of the objectives and based on the results creates the next program or national strategy. Data from these reports are public.

Policy monitoring and evaluation is also done by independent organizations, NGOs, and civil society organizations whose interests are policies for the protection of children, youth and their families.

*(v) Limitations in national and official data and statistics*

Access to information is regulated by the Law on Free Access to Public Information (num. 101/2019). This law defines the method of access to information and the obligation of the public clerk to regularly update the data.

We can find a significant information and data on the website of the State Statistical Office, but this kind of analysis is quantitative, there is lack of qualitative analysis, actually interpretation of the data in terms of some trends or policies.

An important problem in obtaining data and analysing them is the lack of a clear picture of the population in the country, given that the last census is from 2002.

### **18.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision**

#### *Negative aspects of family support in North Macedonia*

- Lack of programmes to support families as a whole
- There are programmes to lift children out of poverty but are currently quite ineffective
- There are social benefits, such as cash transfers, but are inadequate in amount, failing to cover the basic financial security of families with children
- There are not enough instruments for reconciliation of work and family life
- There are no formal family education and mandatory premarital and pre-parenting education
- There is no adequate access to essential services (such as quality pre-schools, day care services and health institution) in rural areas.

#### *Recommended for improvement*

- Holistic approach to family support needed by all family stakeholders
- Creating population public strategies
- National strategy for family support
- National family council
- Intersectoral cooperation between public institution working with families
- Introducing family support worker profile
- Introducing family education (curriculum in primary and secondary school)
- Improving the system for early childhood education
- Mandatory marriage and parent education courses for young couples
- Better access to preschool services, day care and health services

- Introducing the following categories: parent leave, different packages of maternity leave, and part-time work
- Improving existing strategies for woman access at family labor market.

### *Pressing policies and Impact of COVID 19*

Families today are facing many challenges like poverty, social protection, couple and parenting issues, inequality, family violence, work and family balance, etc. However, those challenges are more meaningful today while we are facing coronavirus pandemic. The effects of coronavirus are far-reaching and go beyond family health. This outbreak is having negative effects on the financial situation, children education, work performances, social life, and family relations. Many people are going to lose their jobs and some already have significant reduction in their pay checks. Vulnerable families will suffer more because even before this situation they were struggling to pay their rents, bills or even to buy food.

On the other hand, people that are working and stable companies or institutions are having their own problems. With schools across the country closed, working parents will also struggle with the issue of childcare. Parents, especially mothers, are expected to stay home, and at the same time take care of their children, their education, the household, and get their work tasks done.

Research analyses shows that domestic abuse rates in our country are on the increase due to the strict limitation of movement and recommendation to stay home. The period of quarantine and social distancing it is very hard for extended families, multigenerational families, where all family members are living under the same roof. There are difficulties to manage everyday activities and interaction especially if there is an infected family member.

The effects of the Coronavirus pandemic can be categorized in the following result:

- (1) result in the short-term, but severe economic downturn.
- (2) put upward pressure on unemployment and poverty in North Macedonia,
- (3) cause social and psychological problems (a rise in the domestic violence, anxiety, depression) (UNDP, 2020).

Our government is trying to adjust its politics with other governments worldwide. The Ministry of Labour and Social Politics has adopted new ad hoc measures to protect the most vulnerable citizens: Report domestic violence - to encourage the victims to report violence. Offering shelter up to 12 months, health care, psycho-social intervention and treatment.

- Food donations to single parents, families, victims of domestic violence, shelters, etc.
- SOS lines to support foster parents
- Social help for the families without income up to 10.000 den
- Assistance for the families with disabilities
- Easier access to social help, shorter procedures, and other similar measures (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2020).

Since the pandemic outbreak the Government of North Macedonia proposed four packages of economic measures. They include direct financial support for several vulnerable categories:

- Low-income citizens (unemployed and social assistance beneficiaries). In mid-June 2020, domestic payment cards were introduced to the value of 9,000 denars for approximately 100,000 low-income persons, with an annual net income less than 180,000 denars in 2019 and less than 60,000 denars in Jan-Apr 2020.
- Low-income citizens (employed persons). Employed persons with net-income less than 60,000 denars in Jan-Apr 2020 are entitled to a one-time direct financial support of 3,000 denars to be spent on domestic products and services.

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## 19 NORWAY - National report on family support policy & provision

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### 19.1 Trends and issues related to demography

#### *(i) Fertility rates*

The fertility in Norway is falling. Moreover, a study found that fertility inequalities are rising in terms of social conditions (Lappegård, 2020). Younger generations wait longer before they have children, and the pattern between socioeconomic status and fertility rates have changed. Economic insecurity might be a factor; however, gender equality is also a possible driver of the change according to Lappegård (2020).

Table 1. *Fertility rates*

Year	Fertility rate
2010	1.95
2015	1.72
2016	1.71
2017	1.62
2018	1.56
2019	1.53

#### *(ii) Families with children by number of children*

The following numbers pertain to 2019 data, which has been accessed from Statistics Norway.

Table 2. *Families with children by number of children*

Type of household	n
Private households, all	2 439 242
Living alone	948 474
Couples without children	587 608
Married couples with children	317 028
Cohabiting couples with children 0-17 years	172 272
Mother/father with children 0-17 years	110 578
One-family households with adult children	182 848
Two or more family-households without children 0-17 years	88 477
Two or more family households with children 0-17 years	31 957

*(iii) Percentage of the population from 0 to 19*

There is a small and stable decrease in the child population which can be explained by an increasing proportion of elderly people in the Norwegian population (FHI, 2016).

Table 3. *Percentage of the population from 0 to 18*

Year	%
2010	25.5
2015	24.4

2016	24.2
2017	24
2018	23.8

*(iv) Percentage of population over working (retiring) age*

The proportion of persons over working age are increasing.

Table 4. *Percentage of population over working (retiring) age*

Year	%
2010	14.9
2015	16.1
2016	16.4
2017	16.6
2018	16.9
2019	17.2

*(v) Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities*

Identify vulnerable groups as documented in the social policy literature

We understand “vulnerable groups” as groups of people who are considered at risk of various forms of marginalization and discrimination that cause social problems, and who are or should be paid specific attention through social policies and welfare services.

The welfare state policies in Norway are committed to a human rights approach, emphasizing recognition of the inherent dignity and equal worth of every human being (The

Norwegian Constitution, 2020). Still, vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalized populations can be said to be victims of violations of one or more of their rights such as civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights (Castellino, 2009). These violations can be a result of state policies, institutional and political structure, social dynamics and economic factors. Consequently, many of these groups experience discrimination, social exclusion, stigmatization, and deprivation of resources and basic needs.

#### *The Sami population and National minorities*

The Sami are recognized as indigenous people who live in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. The Sami are scattered throughout the country, but the most concentrated Sami settlement areas are north of Saltfjellet. The Sámi is an ethnic group that is not cohesive when it comes to language, cultural values, and way of life, but provides for diversity among the Sámi (Douglas & Saus, 2016). While regarded as one people, there are various types of Sámi based on patterns of settlement and how they sustain themselves.

The Sami population have a long history of being victims of institutional discrimination and assimilation policy. Today the Sami have territorial rights and cultural autonomy, secured by the Sami Parliament of Norway. However, several studies have shown that parts of the Sami population have experienced discrimination (Midtbøen & Lidèn, 2015).

In 1999, Sami Jews, Roma, Romani, Kvens, and Finns were given legal status as national minorities in Norway. They are recognized as national minorities due to their historical connection to Norway, and partly as a compensation for assimilation policies and discrimination in the past. Despite their extended rights to preserve their religion, language and culture, there is very limited research on discrimination that affects them in contemporary society, and there is also limited research on their living conditions in general (Midtbøen & Lidèn, 2015). There are well justified restrictions on registrations of ethnic affiliation in statistical databases, but this makes it impossible to compare the living conditions among the Sami and the national minorities, with the majority population. We also therefore do not know exactly how many Sami nor how many people belong to different national minorities (ibid.). This creates a vulnerable situation for Sámi children and families and the protection of their rights. In this regard, The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (2018) recommends that the State of Norway disaggregate data by ethnicity, as the absence of such data prevents the State party from gaining the knowledge needed to measure discrimination based on ethnicity and develop measures to overcome it, in particular regarding children exposed to intersecting forms of discrimination.

A study by Douglas and Saus (2019) thus argues for the importance of including ethnicity in the administrative language and system of child welfare services. The complex Sámi identity, combined with the question of how to deal with cultural issues in social work practice, pose a challenge for the child protection services of Norway (Douglas & Saus, 2016; Laitinen & Väyrynen, 2016).

#### *Other minority groups*

Immigrants and Norwegians born to immigrant parents constituted 18.2 per cent of the total population in 2019. According to Statistics Norway (2019c), there are small differences between persons with an immigrant background and the general population, with respect to the levels of satisfaction of the general subjective quality of life. Equal amounts are highly satisfied with life. However, immigrants are somewhat more dissatisfied. There is little or no correlation between reasons for immigration (work, being a refugee) and life satisfaction. However, satisfaction grows as residence time in Norway increases. Immigrants from four countries have particularly low levels of dissatisfaction: Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Poland. The most satisfied immigrants come from Somalia (Statistics Norway, 2019c).

#### *Other vulnerable groups*

While the UN human rights documents provide a broad framework and definition of vulnerable groups, it is up to the member states to identify those based on the context (Chapman & Carbonetti, 2011). The Norwegian social policies related to children, young people and families identify the following groups as vulnerable: children due to their age, children with physical and developmental disabilities, children and families in low-income strata, children in families where parents are divorced/separated and have high conflict, those who have experienced violence, abuse and/or neglect (Hafstad & Augusti, 2019), children and young people associated with minority groups such as immigrant and indigenous groups, unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugee families (Bufdir, 2020; Liden, 2019). There has been an increase in individuals and families living with persistent low income (for a period of three years or longer). Statistics for this is provided in section 3. Other vulnerable groups are individuals experiencing disabilities (Tøssebro, & Wendelborg, 2019).

#### *(vi) Migration patterns*

Include immigration and emigration statistics. Source for table in this section: Statistics Norway

Table 5. *Immigrant and Norwegian born with immigrant parents, per cent of population*

Year	%
2010	11.37
2015	15.58
2019	18.28

Table 6. *Number of immigrants, total, all geopolitical entities*

Year	n
2013	68 313
2014	66 903
2015	60 816
2016	61 460
2017	53 351
2018	57 864

Table 7. *Number of immigrants, children below 15, all geopolitical entities*

Year	n
2013	11 671

2014	11 391
2015	11 620
2016	12 750
2017	11 508
2018	88 912

Table 8. *Emigration 2019 in numbers*

Emigration	n
Total	26 826
Norwegian	9 256
Foreign	17 570

## 19.2 Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles and children's living arrangements

### (i) *Family household types*

Table 9. *Children 0-17 years, 2020 (Statistics Norway, 2020c)*

Family household type	% (n)
Lives with married parents	53,5 % (591 451)
Lives with cohabiting parents	23 % (254 647)
Lives with mother	13 % (141 490)

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Lives with mother and step-parent	6 % (65 127)
Lives with father	3 % (35 227)
Lives with father and step-parent	1,5 % (15 665)
Total	100% (1 103 608)

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*(ii) Marriage and divorce rates*

Marriage and divorce rate in 2018 was 4.3 %.

*(iii) Lone parent families*

See table 9.

*(iv) New family forms such as same-sex couple households*

Since 2009, just under 300 of the marriages contracted each year have been between same-sex couples which indicates that the numbers of same-sex marriages and partnerships are stable 2009 (Statistics Norway, 2018). In 2007, all contracted marriages were n22 111, and out of these same-sex marriages constituted n333.

*(v) Family structures and changes across social groups*

From the early 1970s, the marriage rates in Norway have declined, and the number of divorces has increased. The number of one-person households has doubled. There is no significant difference in the proportion of men and women living alone (SSB, 2019a, p.10). The proportion of cohabiting, unmarried couples have also increased since the 1980s. In 2018, 30 percent of all couples were unmarried cohabiting couples (Ibid, p.11). Since 2009, just under 300 of the marriages contracted each year have been between same-sex couples which indicates that the numbers of same-sex marriages and partnerships are stable 2009 (Statistics Norway, 2018).

*(vi) Children and youth living in institutions*

All measures (supportive in-home and out-of-home care) per 31.12.2018 were 85 413, and out of 1 154 children were living in institutions.

*(vii) Children in out-of-home care such as foster care*

All measures (supportive in-home and out-of-home care) per 31.12.2018 were 85 413.

Out of this number, 11 666 children were in foster care.

*(viii) Home-based support*

Note that one children and family might be benefitting from more one measure from Child welfare services at once. In percent, children receiving all kind of Child welfare services, both in and out-of-home measures as percentage of inhabitants aged 0-22 was 3.7 in 2015 and 3.8 in 2019. Out of these, approximately 40 percent were out-of-home care services, and 60 per cent are in-home services (Statistics Norway, 2020e).

Table 10. *Child welfare service measure, per 31.12.2018 (one person might have more than one measure)*

Type of measure	n
All measures (supportive in-home and out of home care)	85 413
Measures to enhance parenting skills	22 880
Measures to enhance the child's development	30 007
Supervision and control	4403
Housing	3258
Networking/cooperating with other services	11 203

### 19.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare

*(i) Poverty rates*

Table 11. *At risk of poverty*

Year	%
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2010	11.2
2015	11.9
2018	12.9

Table 12. *Severe material deprivation*

Year	%
2010	2
2015	1.7
2018	2.1
2019	2

Table 13. *People at risk of poverty or social exclusion*

Year	%
2010	14.9
2015	15
2018	16.2

Table 14. *Gini coefficient, relative* (see Dahl & Tøge, 2019, p. 270)

Year	%
1995	0.231

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2000	0.257
2005	0.319
2010	0.236
2015	0.263

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Table 15. *Employment/unemployment rates*

Year	%
2010	3.7
2015	4.5
2018	3.9

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*(ii) Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage related to gender, age, ethnicity, migrant status, and other social dimensions*

Along with its Nordic neighbours, Norway has one of the highest proportions of women and men in the labour force in the world (Statistics Norway, 2018). The gender distribution is relatively even, with 53 per cent for men and 47 per for women. One of the main gender disparities in working life is the number of hours, where 37 per cent of employed women work part-time, which is one of the highest proportions in the Nordic countries. Women’s income (income before tax) is 69 per cent of men’s (Statistics Norway, 2018). The ratio between women’s and men’s income has remained relatively stable in recent years, but the gap is slowly narrowing.

There are certain groups that are disadvantaged in the education and labour markets, and identified factors relate to socioeconomic status and risk of poverty, immigrant background and child welfare/protection background (Dæhlen, 2015; Iversen et al., 2010; Madsen & Backe-Hansen, 2015; Johnsen et al., 2018; Statistics Norway, 2020a). According to Statistics Norway (2017b), “more than 390 000 immigrants were employed in the 4th quarter of 2016. This group constituted 60.2 per cent of immigrants settled in Norway aged 15-74 years. In the rest of the

population, the employment rate was 66.7 per cent. These rates have only declined marginally since 2015”.

People with disabilities constitute 17,6% of the Norwegian population (between 15 and 66 years). Only 40,6 % of people with disabilities are employed, while 73,4% of the total population are employed (Statistics Norway, 2020b). A considerable share of disabled not in work, desire to work (27%) (Statistics Norway, 2017a). Some groups are much more at risk of economic disadvantage than others. According to Statistics Norway (2018), living with a persistently low income differs much for various groups. In the period 2014-2016 the following groups had low income for more than three years: Children under 18 years (10 per cent); single parent households (23 per cent) and the risk of economic disadvantage increases much for single households with more than one child; individuals with a migrant background (foreign-born or parents foreign-born) (32 per cent); and pensioners with a minimum pension living in single households (70 per cent).

#### *Patterns of education disadvantage*

According to Statistics Norway (2017b) the situation for individuals with an immigrant background varies much with their country of origin. Norwegians born with immigrant parents have attained lower secondary education roughly equivalent to the rest of the population, however, the group has slightly weaker results than those without an immigrant background.

Nevertheless, many children with an immigrant background have received a higher income level, and more education, compared to their parents. Many Norwegian-born with an immigrant background have attained higher education compared to their immigrant parents. This suggests that this group has shown a relatively strong mobility in the Norwegian society (Statistics Norway, 2019).

A recent public report showed that there are increasing gender inequalities in children's school performances, as well as inequalities associated with SES (NOU 2019: 3).

#### *(iii) Major social welfare trends such as disadvantage risks, welfare benefit receipt levels*

Increased economic inequalities in Norway are mainly due to changes in the tax policies that favour those with the highest income levels. With regards to provision of welfare benefits, there has been a move from universal to contractual rights within the Norwegian welfare state (Alseth, 2020; Kildal, 2013).

#### *(iv) Housing problems*

Table 16. *Overcrowding rate*

Year	%
2010	5.3
2015	5.2
2018	6

Table 17. *Overcrowding rate children, total population*

Year	%
2010	7.1
2015	6.1
2018	5.1

Table 18. *Housing cost overburden rate, EU SILC survey*

Year	%
2010	9.1
2015	9.4
2018	10.6

Table 19. *Housing cost overburden rate children, EU SILC survey*

Year	%
2010	7.4
2015	6.2
2018	8.5

*Summary: The broader socio-economic context and trends which influence children's, parental and family circumstances and environments*

Most Norwegians have very good living conditions, and the overall picture is that for the majority the welfare over a 10-years period has increased. Still, the data measuring income levels, show that the gap between the most marginalized groups and those who have very good living conditions and income levels, increases. This is evident using the Gini-coefficient as a measure (Dahl & Tøge, 2019). Additionally, there has been an increase in individuals and families living in low-income households over longer periods (Bufdir, 2020). According to Statistics Norway's survey on living conditions (2018), relatively few Norwegians experience material poverty, and few have problems with economic difficulties due to housing costs. The same survey shows that most people can participate socially as well, e.g., getting together with friends and family for a meal or going on holiday. On the other side, some groups are more vulnerable to risk of poverty, including persons who receive social assistance, single parents and low-income households. For the latter group, groups with an immigrant background are overrepresented.

The analysis of the Survey of level of living EU-SILC 2013 also shows that single parents and persons born abroad, particularly in Africa, Asia, and Latin-America etc., are among the most disadvantaged groups. In addition, a high level of cumulative problems is found among social assistance recipients. Considering the level of education, persons with primary education only are the most challenged, while those who have secondary education are in an intermediate position, and the persons with a college or university education have the lowest level of

accumulation. For the most widespread of all problem combinations, i.e., both diminished health and weak labour market integration, the educational level is of particular importance.

#### **19.4 The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions and actors' which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision**

##### *(i) Membership to the EU*

No

##### *(ii) Relationship with European Union*

Norway is associated with the EU through its membership in the European Economic Area (EEA) established in 1994, and by virtue of being a founding member of the European Free Trade Association which was founded in 1960.

The EEA agreement brings together the 28 EU member states and the three EEA EFTA states; Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein; in the internal market governed by the same basic rules. It guarantees the EU Single Market's four freedoms, as well as non-discrimination and equal rules of competition throughout the EEA area. The EEA Agreement also covers cooperation in areas such as research and development, education, social policy, the environment, consumer protection, tourism and culture. The three EEA EFTA states are entitled to participation in a number of EU programmes and agencies and may second national experts to the Commission.

Even though Norway does not have formal access to the EU decision-making process, we are able to give input during the preparatory phase, when the EU Commission draws up proposals for new legislation that is to be incorporated into the EEA Agreement. This includes the right to participate in expert groups and Commission committees.

##### *(iii) Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy*

There are various types of policy actors — political-administrative actors, social actors, target groups, beneficiaries. There are some actors that are part of the public system. There is the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, Barneombudet, the Ombudsperson for Children is an advocate for children and young people's rights. The Ombudsperson for Children is appointed by the King, and occupies the post for six years. Fylkesmenn, The County Governor, is the state's representative in local counties and is responsible for monitoring the decisions, objectives and guidelines set out by the Storting and government. In addition, the County Governor provides an important link between municipalities and central government authorities.

*(iv) Influential lobbying groups*

There are many non-profit groups, such as Saving the Children, Fattignettverket (Poverty network), , Mental Helse (Mental Health), Mental Health Youth, Organisasjonen for barnevernsforeldre (Association for child welfare parents), Landsforeningen for barnevernsbarn (Association for children in child welfare), Norske Kveners Forbund/Kvenungdommen, MOT (focus on youth's robustness and awareness through MOT's Programmes in schools and communities) Voksne for barn (Adults for Children), Skeiv Ungdom (LHBTI Youth), NOAS (Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers), Antirasistisk senter (The Norwegian Centre against racism).

In reality, it can be questioned to what extent non-profit organizations affect policies through lobbying. Private, professionalized lobby actors (often globalized) such as, Burson-Marsteller, First House, Geelmuyden-Kiese og Gambit Hill & Knowlton are argued to be very influential on certain policy areas (Kværna, 2011). In addition, professionalized social entrepreneurs are becoming more usual in Norway, such as Ashoka Fellows, where the very popular and influential organization the Change Factory (Forandringsfabrikken) is affiliated (Kojan et al., 2018). Moreover, "Think tanks" have become well established; such as CIVITA, Minerva, Agenda and Manifest.

*(v) Influential policy/research networks*

Research networks:

All large-scale universities (UiT, NTNU, UiS, UiO) have research groups relevant to family support and family policy issues. Certain centres are particularly focused on family support: RKBU, Norwegian Centre for violence and traumatic stress studies, Norwegian Social Research NOVA, Fafo, Frisch-senteret.

*(vi) The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support*

Ministry of Children and Families (BLD) has the overall responsibility in the Norwegian political system for the area of family support/policy. This ministry has responsibility on matters within child welfare services, family affairs, childhood development, religious and life stance affairs and consumer affairs. The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) and the Office for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufetat) are responsible for matters relating to state-funded child welfare services and family support/counselling services (Familievernkontor) and adoption. Their main task is to provide children, young people, and families in need of help and support with appropriate assistance nationwide. For geopolitical purposes, Bufetat is divided into five underlying regions. Many of the services offered to families are provided at a

municipality level by Child Welfare Service's (Barnevernet). Their mandate is to ensure that children and adolescents who are living under conditions that might represent a risk to their health and/or development receive the help they need when they need it, and to contribute to children and adolescents growing up in safe and caring conditions.

*(vii) The democratic system and main political parties; (unitary vs federal state structures; centralised vs decentralised structures)*

Norway is a constitutional monarchy and divides state power between the Parliament, the Cabinet and the Supreme Court. Norway has a multi-party system and there are long traditions that elections result in coalition governments. From 2013 the Conservative Party (Høyre) led by Erna Solberg, formed a center-right coalition. However, for the periods after the Second World War, it has usually been the Labour Party that has led coalition governments.

List of parties in Norway:

- AP, Arbeiderpartiet, Social Democracy, Centre-left
- H, Høyre, Conservative Party, Liberal conservatism, Centre-right
- FRP, Fremskrittspartiet, Progress Party, National Conservatism, Right-wing
- SP, Senterpartiet, Centre Party Nordic agrarianism, Centre
- Sosialistisk Venstreparti Socialist Left Party, Democratic socialism, Left-wing
- V Venstre, Liberal Party, Liberalism, Centre
- KrF Kristelig Folkeparti, Christian Democratic Party, Christian democracy, Centre to centre-right
- MdG Miljøpartiet de Grønne, Green Party Green politics, Centre-left
- Rødt, Red Party Marxism, Left-wing to far-left

As pointed out by Rattsø (2003), there is a high degree of decentralised structure in Norway, where the local public sector (municipalities and the county governors) is an integrated part of the welfare state and plays a crucial role in the provision of most of the welfare services provided, both universal services such as schools, and also child welfare services and health services. However, Rattsø (2003, p.1) argues that "the design implies delegation rather than decentralization and can be called 'administrative federalism'. Local and county governments are primarily agents of the central government. A major objective of the welfare state is to provide uniform welfare services across the country, and the decentralized implementation is

consequently combined with centralized financing, mandating, and detailed service regulation. Hierarchical administrative controls impose fiscal discipline on the system.” However, the centralization of the political decision-making structure is currently much debated in Norway.

*(viii) The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular (e.g., Ministry roles, national vs local/regional government roles)*

This is described under the paragraph ‘Political system’.

*(ix) The ways and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policy-making and reviews*

User involvement is focused on all levels local and at government level, for example at municipality level where many councils have “Ungdomsråd” (Youth Councils). User involvement is also influent and much focused on within the provision of various family support services at all levels. It has been debated, though, if user involvement has been realized in decision-making at policy and provision levels, or if it has become more of a symbolic act (Marthinsen & Julkunen, 2012).

**19.5 List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year 2000**

*(i) For each policy document indicate whether participation of families and young people has been mentioned in the document*

For this section, we performed a systematic review of all public documents published by a governmental institution within the period 2000-2020. The database we used was <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokument/id2000006/>. Keywords applied in the search were family; children; childhood; parenthood; care; child welfare/protection; family services; supportive measures and parental guidance/supervision. The search resulted in **59 publications**. Furthermore, 23 documents were identified as dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents. After reviewing all relevant documents, we considered that 18 documents mentioned and described participation of families and young people (table 1).

Table 20. *Public documents included in the review*

Document	Participation specifically mentioned
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St.meld. 24 – Familien – ansvar, frihet og valgmuligheter [White paper on the importance, value and situaton of the family]s]	Yes
NOU 2019: 20. En styrket familietjeneste. [White paper on the family welfare service]	Yes
NOU 2016: 16 - Ny barnevernslov [White paper on new child welfare act]	Yes
NOU 2000: 12 - Barnevernet i Norge [White paper on the child welfare in Norway]	Yes
NOU 2012: 5 - Bedre beskyttelse av barns utvikling [White paper on the principle of filiation bond in the Child Welfare Service]	Yes
NOU 2017:12 – Svikt og svik [White paper on cases where children have experienced violence, sexual abuse and neglect] ]	Yes
NOU 2009:22 – Det du gjør, gjør det helt [White paper on better coordination of services for vulnerable children and Youths]	Yes, mostly indirectly
St.meld. nr. 39 (2001-2002) - Oppvekst- og levekår for barn og ungdom i Norge [White paper on childhood and life conditions for children and youths in Norway]	Yes , thoroughly
St.meld.nr. 40 (2001-2002) – Om barne- og ungdomsvernet [White paper about child and youth protection]	Yes
Meld. St. 6 (2012-2013) - En helhetlig integreringspolitikk [White paper on integration policy]	Yes
Meld. St. 15 (2012–2013) - Forebygging og bekjempelse av vold i nære relasjoner [White paper about prevention and combating domestic violence]	Yes, but limited to labour market
St.meld. nr. 30 (2000-2001) - Langtidsprogrammet 2002 –2005 [Long-term Programme 2002-2005]	Yes
Prop. 72 L (2014-2015) - Endringer i barnevernloven (utvidet adgang til å pålegge hjelpetiltak) [Proposition to the Storting about changes in The Child Welfare Act (extended permission to impose in-home measures)]	Yes
Prop. 73 L (2016–2017) - Endringer i barnevernloven (barnevernsreform) [Proposition to the Storting about Child Welfare Reform]	Yes, but mostly indirectly

Prop. 169 L (2016–2017) - Endringer i barnevernloven mv. (bedre rettssikkerhet for barn og foreldre) [Proposition to the Storting about changes in The Child Welfare Act etc. (Better Legal Protection for Children and Parents)]	Yes, much emphasized
Prop. 106 L (2012–2013) - Endringer i barnevernloven [Proposition to the Storting about changes in The Child Welfare Act]	Yes
Ot.prp. nr. 104 (2008-2009) - Om lov om endringer i barnelova mv. [Proposition about parental responsibility, place of residence and contact with both parents after parents' separation]	Yes
Prop. 12 S (2016–2017) - Opptappingsplan mot vold og overgrep (2017–2021) [Proposition about short- and long-term measures against domestic violence and child violence and abuse]	Yes, but to a little extent
Prop. 102 LS (2014-2015) - Lov om gjennomføring av konvensjon 19. oktober 1996 om jurisdiksjon [Proposition about the 1996 Hague Convention]	Yes, partly
Prop. 121 S (2018–2019) - Opptappingsplan for barn og unges psykiske helse (2019–2024) [Proposition about a long-term plan to improve children and youth's mental health and living conditions]	Yes
Meld.St.19 (2014-2015) – Folkehelsemeldingen [White paper about public health]	Yes, partly and mostly related to children's position
Meld. St. 17 (2015–2016) - Trygghet og omsorg [White paper about foster care]	Yes

In the review of the above listed document, we were focusing on what descriptions of participation were included. The main emphasis in most documents was child participation, with many documents referring to the Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child as a justification for their participation, as well as relevant Norwegian legislation, especially the Children's Act (especially §31) and the Child Welfare Act (§§1-6 and 6-3). Several documents describe the increased focus on child participation during the last few years (not specified timeframe), with a strengthened child perspective in the legislation. They also stress the importance of child participation, with justifications such as "ideas, thoughts and suggestions can make important contributions to public decision-making processes" (St.meld. 24). Children and youths expressing their opinions is also presented as an essential precondition for clarifying "the best interest of the child". Equality and participation (from both children and parents) are also described as core values in the Norwegian child welfare system (NOU 2000:12).

Parents' participation is not as thoroughly described. The emphasis is on the importance of cooperation between parents and different agencies as school, where it is highlighted that by emphasizing parent - school cooperation, the school can increase some students' performance, and decrease differences between children (St.meld.24). The main focus in the documents regarding parent participation is the child welfare services. It is stated that one of the key development features in the child welfare service is that the methods require work in partnership with the parents. The child welfare service shall emphasize parents' participation and the resources they represent for their children, even when the children are in care (NOU 2000:12).

Several of the documents describe ways to achieve (user) participation on group level, mainly through organization of parents and children in associations, such as the National Association for child welfare children, "The child welfare professionals" (youths with child welfare experience) and National Association for child welfare parents, who all work for strengthening child and parent's rights in the child welfare/protection system. The National Committee for primary and secondary education and a committee for kindergarten are also described. These committees have a mandate to represent/take care of parents' interests in resp. kindergarten and school contexts and collaborate with relevant actors where it is important that the parent perspective is present.

*(ii) The extent to which such participation has been implemented*

*Participation in the Child Welfare Service*

It is a clear tendency for the latest revisions of the Child Welfare Act (CWA), that the Child's right to participation increasingly has been concretized and emphasized in the Act, according to the CRC art. 12 and the Norwegian Constitution § 104. The formulation in the Act has changed from *opportunity* to participate, to emphasize the *right* to participate. It is also specified that the child has the right to participate in all aspects regarding the CWA. The Child Welfare Service and the County social welfare board are to a greater extent hold accountable for the child's right to participation, as they must make clear in their decisions, what the child's opinion is, what weight it is given and how the best interest of the child have been assessed.

The child is, with the latest revisions of the CWA to a greater extent recognized as an autonomous individual, with their own rights according to the Child Welfare Act. For example, the Norwegian Child Welfare Services are categorized as Child Centric Systems in comparative studies regarding child protection typologies (Gilbert, Parton & Skivenes, 2011). The parents' participation is not regulated in the CWA to the same extent/in the same way as for children, but it has been concretized in the CWA that the CWS must exercise their work with respect for, and as much as possible, in collaboration with the child and its parents. Parents' participation is

mainly regulated by their party rights as parents (The Public Administration Act and the Children's Act).

A recent research report (Havnen et al., 2020) on children and parents' participation in the CWS notifications and investigations, indicates that despite the extended focus on the child's right to participate when in contact with the Child Welfare Service, there is still a way to go in practice. They found that the CWS talked with 60% of the children and had no conversation with 40 % of the children (n= 1123). The reasons for not talking with the children were not well documented by the CWS (only documented in one fifth of the cases).

#### *CRC's observations of the implementation of the Child's right to participation*

Concluding observations from The Committee on Rights of the Child (CRC/nor/co/5-6) States that the Norwegian legal framework to a large extent is in line with the principles in art. 12. However, the Committee recommends increasing the effort to strengthen compliance in practice with the child's right to be heard, in particular with regard to children who are more vulnerable to exclusion in this regard, such as children of a younger age, migrant, asylum-seeking and refugee children, and children with disabilities. The Committee also recommends that it must be ensured that relevant professionals are regularly trained in implementing participation of children in decisions affecting their lives.

### **19.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services**

#### *(i) The priorities in child welfare and family policy*

The child welfare and family policies are an important component of the Norway's welfare state. The main priority in these policies is to ensure that children are brought up in safe and secure environment so that they can reach their full potential. The policies also aim to equalize families' wellbeing and security, both economically and socially, through empowerment and social provision, as well as having a work-life balance, and that everyone in the family should receive equal opportunities (related to gender and generational equality). Children and their families have a right to appropriate and quality services which are available to them at the right time. The Norwegian welfare system is typically defined as a social democratic regime (Greve, 2020), with a strong state and provision of universal welfare services. However, this is also challenged in Norway, with increased outsourcing of welfare services and a shift from universal-based to more target-specific services, and a shift from equal outcomes to equal opportunities (Alseth, 2020).

For the case of child welfare services, they have a broad mandate and have been considered as both family orientated and child-centred (Gilbert, Parton & Skivenes, 2011), with an emphasis on early intervention and a need focus. The mandate is focused on equalizing opportunities and life chances and promoting well-being via social investment policies (Kojan et al., 2019). It has been argued that the child welfare system has become increasingly child-centric with a strong child rights perspective (Falch-Eriksen & Backe-Hansen, 2018).

*(ii) The main types of family provision and support and key features (e.g., different types of cash support (universal and targeted, work-family reconciliation measures and children's/family services, childcare, etc.)*

The family provision and support are generally defined as forms of social and economic support provided to the members of family, mainly children and their parents (Churchill, 2011). In this section, the focus is on the formal support and provision services, such as emotional, financial, professional, and childcare support provided to families. These services may be provided by both state and private actors.

The family provision and support services can be categorized into two main categories: universal and target specific. Universal services are available to all families and children equally, while target specific services are there to support certain groups such as, single parents, couples with children getting divorced, low-income families etc. Some of the main allowances and services are mentioned below:

1. Universal child and family provisions
  - *Child benefits*

It is a monthly non-taxable allowance, which is provided to families with children under the age of 18 years. This is available universally to all the parents living in Norway, irrespective of their citizenship. These benefits are payable from the month a child is born or adopted. The rates of child benefit are different for first, second and other children, and is determined by the parliament. Single parents receive double child benefits.

- *Parental leave benefits*

Both employed and self-employed residents of Norway are entitled to several services and provisions with regards to pregnancy, birth and/or adoption. These policies contribute towards the gender equality in the work environment. Pregnant women who are not working and/or have not accrued the right to parental benefit are entitled to a one-time grant that is paid to them after childbirth.

Pregnant employees are entitled to paid time-off for their check-ups if such appointments cannot be arranged outside the work hours. They are also entitled to a pregnancy benefit if they are unable to work during their pregnancy due to any possible risk of harm to the unborn child (The Work Environment Act 2006).

The state is obliged to provide maternity leave, paternity leave and parental leave. This leave can be availed with full parental benefit (financial) for a period of 49 weeks or an 80% of the parental benefit for a period of 59 weeks. The corresponding periods for adoption are 46 weeks with full benefits and 56 weeks (80% benefits). The leave period is increased in cases of giving birth to or adoption of two or three children (additional 17 or 46 weeks respectively with full benefits) (The National Insurance Act 1997).

The parental leave period consists of 15 weeks for the mother, 15 weeks for the father or co-mother, and a joint period of 16 weeks. Mothers also have a right to three weeks of leave before their due date. Parental leave can be deferred or taken as partial leave. However, one cannot receive parental benefit more than three years after the birth of the child or takeover of care in case of adoption.

According to The Work Environment Act (2006), nursing mothers are entitled to at least one hour off each day or as required. In addition, parents are also entitled to leave of absence if their child is sick. The age limit for children in this case is 12 years. Each parent has a quota of 10 days leave per year to stay at home to take care of the sick child; this quota is increased to 15 days in case of two or more children. Single parents are entitled to a leave of 20 days per year for one child and 30 days for two or more children. Each parent has a right to 20 days per year (or 40 days for single parent) if a child is chronically ill.

- *Early childhood education and care*

This service is provided to children and their families through kindergartens in Norway. According to The Kindergarten Act, the role of these institutions is to assist parents in the upbringing of their children. However, attending kindergarten is not compulsory like schools. Children from age 0-5 years have a right to a place in kindergarten. This placement is subsidized by the state, and provides an opportunity to parents to work and/or study, while the children get pedagogical mentorship and care in the institution. The Kindergarten Act also emphasize that all kindergartens must consider the child's social, ethnic, and cultural background. For example, kindergartens in Sami (one of the indigenous groups in Norway) districts are based on Sami language and culture. The state aims to make kindergarten accessible to all children regardless of their parents' financial situation, thus providing 20 hours of free kindergarten to low-income families (The Kindergarten Act 2018).

- *Cash-for-care*

This service is available to children and their parents as an alternative to using kindergartens. This provision is non-taxable and is granted by state to the parents of children (one-year olds) for a period of 11 months. This provision can be combined with part-time attendance of kindergartens with a reduced rate of cash benefit. One of the reasons for this provision was reduce the long waiting lists for children's admission to the kindergartens.

- *Tax rebates for families*

Parents with children under the age of 12 years are entitled to tax deductions based on their documented expenses related to childcare. A few examples of such childcare expenses are private childcare (au pairs and nannies), after and/or before school hours activities, additional transport expenses related to the pick and drop of the child to the aforementioned activities etc. (Skatteetaten).

- *Family Counselling Service*

This service is free and available for all parents through the Directorate for children, Youth and Family Affairs. It offers help to people who need support to deal with the difficult issues and situations at home. The staff at the centre for family counselling are mainly psychologists and social workers, who provide advice and guidance on relationship problems to individuals, couples and/or the whole family. It is a preventative service, which entails that families can seek help at an early stage in order to prevent escalation in crisis and conflicts (Family Protection Offices Act).

## 2. Target-specific child and family provisions

- *Mediation and parental cooperation*

Parents of children under the age of 16 who move apart or divorce and/or are considering legal action are obliged to attend one hour of mediation. However, parents are entitled to up to seven hours of free mediation. (Regulations on mediation according to the Marriage Act and the Children Act). The goal for the mediation is to reach a written agreement between the parents. The main points of the agreement are division of parental responsibility, permanent residence and contact arrangements. The mediator's role is to ensure that the agreement is in the best interest of the child and is in line with The Children's Act.

- *Child Welfare Services (CWS)*

The child welfare services are mandated to provide timely and necessary assistance and care to children and young people living in conditions that may be detrimental to their health and

development (The Child Welfare Act). These services are available to all people living in the state, irrespective of their citizenship. CWS provide help and support to children, young people, and their families through a wide range of in-home-services and out-of-home care.

*(iii) The types of funding involved such as state, charity vs private sector providers and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners*

Norway is a welfare state, which entails that the state is responsible for delivery of aforementioned family services and provisions. This is done either directly or through local authorities (municipalities). However, some of these services are delivered through private service providers (for example, child protection institutions, kindergartens etc.) funded by state. There are also some ideal and/or charity organizations that provide services such as family mediation and counselling, etc. It is argued that ideologies such as neo-liberalism and New Public Management are gradually forcing the welfare state to retreat. This entails that the private actors, both for-profit and not-for-profit, are increasingly taking over the provision of social and welfare services that were traditionally under the legal domain of state (Jonsson 2015, Jonsson & Kojan 2017, Sivesind 2017).

*(iv) Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations*

The public government policy monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems relevant in the area of child and family policies and service delivery in Norway are Riksrevisjonen, Helsetilsynet, Fylkesmannen and Ombudsman for Children. The two main international actors relevant for monitoring policies concerning children and family services are: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

However, the policies are also monitored and evaluated through research conducted by both national and international actors. At the national level, policies and social services are monitored and evaluated through research conducted by Social Research Institutes at local universities, other research institutes and NGOs, and the public monitor systems such as Ombudsman for Children.

*(v) Limitations in national and official data and statistics*

Norwegian public statistics within the area of family and child welfare is considered to be of good quality. Statistics Norway has the overall responsible for the collection, processing and reporting of data. Local authorities report yearly. There are control routines to follow up reporting from the local authorities to Statistics Norway.

## **19.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision**

- (i) *What are the prominent policy and practice developments related to family support services from children's rights, social equality, and evidence-informed perspectives? What are the pressing policy, practice and research challenges impeding developments? \* What are the pressing gaps in provision?*

Although Norway is among the most generous welfare states in the world, inequality in earnings and wealth has steadily increased in recent decades (Dølvik et al., 2015; Halvorsen & Stjernø, 2008; Kamali & Jönsson, 2018; Sandbæk, 2012; Statistics Norway, 2019b). The growth in income inequality tells us that disparities in access to work have increased, that the wage coordination system has failed to moderate inequalities in market income, and that tax systems are not preventing the richest in society from taking a larger share of the pie (Dølvik et al., 2015).

In Norway, especially since 2013, the government policies have involved tax cuts, followed by reductions to public spending. In sum, taxes have been reduced by 25.5 billion kroner since 2013, and income tax has decreased from 28% to 22% (Statistics Norway, 2019b). Critics claim that over time the universal distribution has legitimised a model of welfare distribution that is 'affluent-targeted', in that is essentially favours the better off, including the reduction of taxes for upper and middle classes (Kamali & Jönsson, 2018, pp. 6). Even if the income differences in Norway are low in an international context, 10 per cent of all children grew up in low-income families in 2015 which amounted to 98,175 children (Bufdir, 2017). Although the connections between children's upbringing conditions and families' resources are complex, we know that when the number of children in low-income families increases, more children in Norway will be increasingly exposed to small and large negative life events.

The Norwegian child protection system is family service-oriented and child-centric, and is a vast social welfare system that aims to provide for redistribution through measures aiming at children's caring environment, including their living conditions (Falch-Eriksen & Skivenes, 2019). However Falch-Eriksen and Skivenes (2019) argue that the Norwegian child protection system has the following blind spots or five areas of improvements: (1) including increased value pluralism in societies which is accentuated in relation to migration; (2) the wide scope for discretionary decision-making, which threatens the principle of equality; (3) the issue of the demands of professional competency can be substantially strengthened; (4) the pattern of deficient involvement of children; and (5) the lack of attention and awareness around the conditions for choosing one's life course as an adult. In addition, Kojan and Clifford (2018) caution that a stronger emphasis on rights will not necessarily lead to better child protection for children and families who suffer the most complex problems. The argument is that rights discourse can also reinforce and reproduce an already individualized, privatized responsibility for children's development, transferring obligations from the state to marginalized parents. An

indicator of this development is that the attention of the child services to the socioeconomic situation of the families has been downplayed in the recent Child welfare Act (NOU:2016).

In recent years, the Norwegian child protection system has been severely criticized nationally and internationally of being exceedingly intrusive as a child protection system (Falch-Eriksen & Skivenes, 2019). The massive criticism has originated from both different public agencies and private persons and organizations, and has probably also contributed to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) accepting several cases about child protection (ibid.)

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## 20 POLAND - National report on family support policy & provision

**Anna Rybinska & Syma Marta Al Azab-Malinowska**

### 20.1 Trends and issues related to demography

#### *(i) Fertility rates*

The fertility rate is the average number of children born to a woman in a lifetime, assuming that throughout the reproductive period (15-49 years). Fertility rates were historically low level near 2003 (TFR 1.22), after that it increased slowly until 2010 (in 2010 TFR 1.41) and then started to decline again till 2013 (TFR 1.29). However, from 2014 to 2018, an increase in fertility rates can be observed. Compared to 2010, the fertility rate in 2018 is 0.05 higher (Eurostat Data Browser, 2020a). This change might be connected with the governmental program “Family 500+”, implemented in 2015. The “Family 500+ program” realizes three main goals of the government: improving the demographic situation, reducing poverty among the youngest, and investing in the family (“Family 500+”).

One of the researchers, Prof. Irena E. Kotowska draws attention to a certain tendency shows that in large Polish cities the increase in fertility rate was faster than in the whole of Poland. The reasons for this situation are seen, among others, in improving labour market conditions and wage growth, as well as family policy measures implemented at the national level and at the level of local governments (Forsal.pl).

Critical opinions are also voiced, pointing out that the basic assumption of the Program, i.e., increase in fertility after its introduction, has not been realized. The extent to which the program has contributed to pushing women out of the labour market is also debated (according to estimates, this concerns about 100,000 women) (Magda I, Brzeziński M. And others 2019) - at the same time, some voices indicate that the program has enabled women to leave abusive relationships (this has been reported by, among others, the "Blue Line" Polish National Referral Service for Victims of Family Violence). In her analysis, Gromada highlights that "from the perspective of the quality of public policy, the weakness of the program is the lack of consistency in what the program intends to achieve. This makes both the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of the policy impossible to assess, as it is not clear what would be successful. However, from a party policy perspective, broad and flexible goals are politically safer and more effective in terms of image" (Gromada, 2018).

In the context of other European Union countries, Poland belongs to the European countries with the lowest fertility rate. According to Eurostat data from 2019, one woman in Poland will give birth to an average of 1.44 children in her lifetime. This is significantly less than is needed to keep the population stable (300gospodarka.pl).

Table 1. *Total fertility rates*

Year	Total fertility rates
2010	1.41
2015	1.32
2016	1.39
2017	1.48
2018	1.46

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

*(ii) Families with children by number of children*

The most popular family models in Poland are family with one child and family with two children. Every year the number of children in families (with one child, with two children, with three children, with four children and more) is decreasing. The only exception is the model of a family with three children - the number of such families decreases from 2010 to 2012, then increases in 2013, and in 2014 decreases again. (Emp@tia, Information and Service Portal, n.d.).

Table 2. *Families with children by number of children*

Year	Families with 1 child	Families with 2 children	Families with 3 children	Families with 4 and more children	TOTAL
2010	546603	546489	226543	107447	1427082
2011	502381	504617	207872	97378	1312248
2012	449507	462952	188944	86339	1187742
2013	424583	436570	178086	80809	1120048
2014	383586	405357	167755	74465	1031163

Note. Own study based on Emp@tia, Information and Service Portal (2021).

*(iii) Percentage of the population from 0 to 19*

In 2010 the share of population aged 0-18 years in Poland was about 22 per cent. From 2010, the percentage of the population from 0-18 decreased – in 2010 it was 21.9, in 2015 – 20.4, in 2016 – 20.2, however in 2017 it was 20.1 and remained at the same level until 2019 (Eurostat Data Browser, 2020b).

Table 3. *Population 18 years and under*

Year	%
2010	21.9
2015	20.4
2016	20.2
2017	20.1

2018	20.1
2019	20.1

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

*(iv) Percentage of population over working (retiring) age;*

From 2010 till 2019, the percentage of the population aged 65 increased by nearly four percentage points. Old dependency ratio increases.

Table 4. *Population 65 years and over*

Year	%
2010	13.6
2011	13.6
2015	15.4
2016	16.0
2017	16.5
2018	17.1
2019	17.1

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

*(v) Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities*

Due to data published by the government, Poland is inhabited by representatives of nine national minorities: Belarusians, Czechs, Lithuanians, Germany, Armenians, Russians, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Jews, and four ethnic minorities: Karaims, Lemkos, Roma, Tatars.

Moreover, the territory of the Pomeranian Voivodeship is inhabited by Kashubians, a community using the regional language (*National and Ethnic Minorities Ministry of the Interior and Administration, 2021*). In 2011, the national census was held. The results showed initially that almost 99.7% (38,401 thousand) are citizens of the Republic of Poland, 0.2% were foreigners. Citizenship has not been established for less than 0.1%. For comparison, in 2002, almost 98.2% were Polish citizens, 0.1% - foreigners, for about 1.7% it was not established (GUS, 2011). However, this situation has changed in recent years, the number of people from other countries has increased significantly. It is particularly visible in many regions of the country, where adults take up employment, as well as in schools and kindergartens attended by children.

*(vi) Migration patterns;*

(Include immigration and emigration statistics)

Data published by Eurostat show that the number of immigrations in Poland has been systematically increasing from 2010 until 2014. Then, for the next two years, there was a slight decrease, followed by a significant increase. According to the available data, the largest number of immigrants took place in 2017 - it amounted to 309 353, and in the following year it decreased by over 95 thousand - amounting to 214 083.

Table 5. *The number of immigrations*

Year	Number
2010	155 131
2011	157 059
2012	217 546
2013	220 311
2014	222 275
2015	218 147
2016	208 302

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2017	309 353
2018	214 083

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Note. Eurostat Database (2020d).

A different situation can be observed in the number of emigration contexts. The number of emigrations was systematically increasing from 2010 until 2013. Then, for the next few years, there was a huge decreased from 268 299 in 2014 to 189 794 in 2018.

Table 6. *The number of emigrations*

Year	Number
2010	218 126
2011	265 798
2012	275 603
2013	276 446
2014	268 299
2015	258 837
2016	236 441
2017	218 492
2018	189 794

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Note. Eurostat Database (2020e).

The important fact is that in 2021 457.2 thousand of foreigners, had valid residence permits. The largest groups were citizens of: Ukraine - 244.2 thousand people, Belarus - 28.8 thousand people, Germany - 20.5 thousand people, Russia - 12.7 thousand people, Vietnam - 10.9 thousand people, India - 9.9 thousand people, Italy - 8.5 thousand people, Georgia - 7.9 thousand people, China - 7.1 thousand people. and Great Britain - 6.6 thousand people.

It is worth saying that in 2020, the greatest increase among foreigners settling in Poland concerned the following citizens: Ukraine - by 29.4 thousand people; Belarus - by 3.2 thousand people; Georgia - by 2.4 thousand people; Moldova - by 1.2 thousand people; South Korea - by 0.5 thousand people (GOV, 2021).

## **20.2 Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles and children's living arrangements**

### *(i) Family household types;*

The analysis of the available data and literature shows that the following types of family household distinguished in Poland are: marriage with children, mother/father raising a child or children alone, persons in an informal relationship (cohabitation) bringing up children from that relationship, persons in informal relationships (cohabitation) bringing up children from previous relationships together, marriage without children, persons in informal relationships (cohabitation) without children, same-sex relationships (gays or lesbians) raising a child / children of one of them together, a relationship between two people of the same sex (gay or lesbian) who are not raising children. (CBOS: Opinion Research Center, 2019).

### *(ii) Marriage and divorce rates;*

At the turn of the 1980s and 1990s in Poland, around 250,000 new marriages were created each year. In the next following years, the number of marriages decreased to 192,000 till 2002 and next increase to almost 258 000 in 2008. The data base shows that in 2020 145,000 new marriages were created – the decrease compared to 2019 amounted to over 38 thousand.

In 2020 over 51,000 married couples divorced. It was over 14,000 less than in 2019. Around 0.7 thousand married couples were separated – 0.5 thousand less than the year before. The number of divorces in cities is almost three times higher than in the countryside. This situation might be connected with the pandemic COVID-19, because due to sanitary restrictions some weddings were cancelled or limited, also the courts work were limited so some divorce and separation cases were also cancelled (GUS, *Marriages and fertility in Poland; Condition and structure as well as natural movement in the territorial profile in 2020*).

Table 7. *Crude marriage rates*

Year	Crude marriage rates
2010	6.0
2011	5.4
2012	5.4
2013	4.7
2014	5.0
2015	5.0
2016	5.1
2017	5.1
2018	5.1
2019	4.8

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

Table 8. *Crude divorce rates*

Year	Crude marriage rates
2010	1.6
2011	1.7
2012	1.7
2013	1.7

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2014	1.7
2015	1.8
2016	1.7
2017	1.7
2018	1.7
2019	1.7

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Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

*(iii) Lone-parent families;*

The data published by Eurostat show that in 2017 15% of the EU population were lone parents. In Poland, most often single-parent families are single mothers with children. It is estimated that single mothers constitute over 20% of Polish families, and single fathers constitute 2.8% (GUS, Eurostat).

Table 9. *Lone-mother families with children*

Year	Number
2002	1,798 thousand
2011	2,174 thousand

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Note. GUS (2011).

Table 10. *Lone-father families with children*

Year	Number
2002	232 thousand
2011	329 thousand

Note. GUS (2011).

*(iv) New family forms such as same-sex couple households*

Due to the lack of legal acts regulating their existence in Poland and the low social tolerance, not all homosexual relationships appear. Very few researchers deal with this topic. Due to the limited data, it is difficult to precisely indicate the number of same-sex families. However, in the literature written by Polish researchers, the concept of "families by choice" can be found, which may mean that their existence is more and more noticed and emphasized. The issue of rainbow families is dealt with mainly by non-governmental organizations (e.g. Rainbow Families Foundation). Despite the lack of legal solutions (e.g. the problem of child adoption, issuing documents to children of same-sex couples born abroad) these families function and exist. Estimates say that in Poland about 50 thousand children are raised by non-heterosexual parents. They often experience discrimination, and the lack of protection and legal solutions intensifies the so-called minority stress. In Poland, the concept of minority stress in the context of non-heteronormative people is dealt with by Professor Iniewicz (Iniewicz 2015; Iniewicz 2020):

"The concept of minority stress is not based on a single theory, but is rooted in various theoretical concepts from the fields of psychology and sociology. First of all, it refers to the situation in which people belonging to minorities live and the contradictions they experience between their system of values and the preferred one in the social environment in which they function. [...] Negative perceptions of a group can therefore lead to the formation of negative self-perceptions, and, in the long run, even to the development of mental disorders". (Iniewicz, Grabarski, Mijas 2012).

The problem of the lack of legislative solutions and legal protection for non-heteronormative persons has been raised among others by non-governmental organizations and the Ombudsman. Poland still falls short of European standards in protecting LGBT people's human rights, ombudsman stresses: "Violations of the right to private and family life of persons

result in Poland primarily from the failure to regulate the legal situation of families formed by same-sex couples. There is a lack of any institutionalization of civil partnerships, regulations defining the legal situation of children born abroad whose birth certificates indicate same-sex couples as parents), and legislation defining the gender reunification procedure (the Gender Reconciliation Act adopted in 2015 by the Sejm was vetoed by the President of Poland). Poland remains far from meeting the international standard in these areas, set by, among others, the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights." (Bodnar A. 2019)

In research on the situation of LGBTIA people, it is impossible not to raise issues related to the experience of violence and hate speech. The Report "The Social Situation of LGBTIA People in Poland" (for 2015-2016) discusses the issue of violence. As the results of the research show, "more than two-thirds of those surveyed have experienced at least one violent incident in the past two years motivated by prejudice. By far the most frequent experience of LGBTIA people is verbal violence, nevertheless, the number of people who have experienced physical and sexual violence in the last two years is very high."(Świder M., Winiewski M. 2017) In addition, LGBTIA people indicate low trust in the Government and the police (NGOs are the most trusted among the community. At the same time, public opinion polls still show disapproval of marriage and the adoption of children by same-sex couples among those surveyed (CBOS 2019b).

*(v) Family structures and changes across social groups*

At this point, it is worth to signal the existence of a tendency that researchers notice – e.g. publication edited by Anna Matysiak, which appeared as a result of a project about the same name: "New patterns of family formation and development in Poland. Causes and impact on satisfaction with life" (Matysiak 2014). At the very beginning, the author mentions the most important changes that can be observed even from the 1960s in Northern Europe (which gradually in the future decades reached the whole of Europe, for years in the eighties and in the nineties more and more noticed also in Poland). They include: "an increase in the importance of cohabitation, a decrease in the propensity to marry, delay in the decision to parentage, an increase in childlessness and a decrease in the number children in the family, as well as an increase in the percentage of extra-marital births".

*(vi) Children and youth living in institutions*

Due to information published by the Central Statistical Office foster care in 2018 provided care of 71.8 thousand children. This number include 55.2 thousand children in family care and 16.7 thousand in institutional custody. Compared to 2017, in 2018 the number of children staying in the foster care has decreased by 1.1% and increased by 0.4% in 2019. Children which in 2018

benefited from the family care were mostly boys – 50.7%, rest - 49.3% were girls. The most numerous groups in the foster care were children aged 7-13 (19 615). Out of all children covered by the family care were disabled children – 6,017 and 2,906 were orphans. There are various forms of children and youth institutional care in Poland. “At the end of 2019, there were 1,166 care and education centres, 10 regional care and therapy centres and 2 pre-adoption intervention centres operating in Poland. The care and educational facilities include socialization (720), family (230), intervention (41), specialist and therapeutic (24) facilities, and facilities combining tasks (151)” (GUS, 2020).

*(vii) Children in out of home care such as foster care;*

In 2019 55,429 children were in the family foster care, including 4,500 children in family orphanages. 6,027 of these children were disabled and 2,739 were orphans. Considering the age of the charges placed in family foster care, both in foster families and in family orphanages, the largest group were children aged 7-13 (19 641 children). The structure of children in the family foster care group was: 1.6% - 0 years; 9.5% - 1 to 3 years; 35.4% - 4 to 6 years; 28.2% - 14 to 17 years; 18.2% - 18 to 24 years.

At the end of 2019, 16,668 children were in the institutional foster care. The most numerous groups were pupils aged 14–17 (7,410 children). The second largest group (4,058 children) are children aged 10–13. The youngest age group below 1 year of age was the least numerous (196 children) (GUS, 202).

*(viii) Home based support*

The family support system in Poland consists mainly of: social welfare centers, interdisciplinary teams dealing with counteracting domestic violence, powiat family support centers, probation officers, assistants. It seems that the problem lies both in the legal acts in force and in the inefficiency of the support system. As Szymańczak (2016) points out:

“1. The deteriorating condition of the family, both in terms of family cohesion and ties, as well as in material terms (approx. 10% of children under the age of 18 are affected by extreme poverty, i.e. at the subsistence level), is the main reason for the increasing percentage of children covered by proceedings of family courts and courts of foster care.

2. In practice, children are placed in foster care not always in accordance with the applicable regulations, not only because the relevant services take wrong decisions and actions, but also because many aid institutions provided for by law, i.e. family assistants, supporting families, There is not enough daily support at the local level, or most often there is no one at all.

Financial support provided by social welfare centers to families with low financial status under the provisions of the Act on social assistance in many cases does not meet the reported needs.

3. Children raised in problem families and in foster care are a large, but the weakest and most vulnerable social group in Poland. The percentage of the total number of minors under the supervision of courts in 2014 was 3% (in 1989 - 1.6%). The percentage of all children placed in foster care in 2014 was 1.1% (in 1990 - 0.43%). According to the data of the Supreme Audit Office, the percentage of families who in the years 2012–2014 were "taken their children away" and placed in foster care in relation to all families not fulfilling the care and educational functions covered by social assistance amounted to 4.5%. Improving the social and living situation of this group should become an important goal of the state's policy towards the family". (Szymańczak, 2016).

### 20.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare

(i) *Poverty rates;*

Based on Central Statistical Office (GUS, 2020) at risk of poverty in 2019 was 15.4%. Although this percentage is lower than in 2010 by 2.2 percentage points, compared to the results in the EU countries, it is a relatively high number.

Table 11. *At-risk-of-poverty rate*

Year	Percentage
2010	17.6
2011	17.7
2012	17.1
2013	17.3
2014	17.0
2015	17.6
2016	17.3

2017	15.0
2018	14.8
2019	15.4

*Note.* GUS (2020). GUS – Central Statistical Office. Retrieved December 8, 2020 from <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tessi010/default/table?lang=en>

In 2017, a significant decrease in the value of poverty rate was observed among persons on farms living on the so-called unprofitable sources. However, this group is still among the most at risk of poverty. There was a significant decrease in the poverty rate among single parents with dependent children and marriages with at least 3 dependent children. The extent of poverty among households with at least 3 children aged 0-17 years decreased from about 10% in 2016 to less than 8% in 2017. While in the younger age groups there was a decrease in the range of extreme poverty, the poverty rate among the elderly, aged 65 and over remained at a similar level. A clear improvement in the situation of households with at least one child under 16 years of age holding a disability certificate was observed. There was a decrease in the range of extreme poverty among those living in farms where the head of the farm had, at most, a lower secondary education. The situation of farms whose head had secondary or higher education did not improve. In 2017, the extreme poverty rate in the countryside as well as in medium and large cities fell below 500,000. There was no improvement in the situation in the largest and smallest cities.

*(ii) Employment/unemployment rates;*

Due to data published by Central Statistical Office (GUS, 2019) as of 31 XII 2018 in Poland was 11,792 thousand employees of which 5,713 thousand was women, annual average in thousands was 10,606.

Registered unemployed persons as 31 XII 2018 in Poland was 968.9 thousand, 426.2 thousand men and 542.6 thousand women.

Table 12. *Registered unemployment rate in 2010 - 2020*

Year/ Month	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII
2020	5.5	5.5	5.4	5.8	6.0	6.1	6.1	6.1	6.1	6.1	-	-
2019	6.1	6.1	5.9	5.6	5.4	5.3	5.2	5.2	5.1	5.0	5.1	5.2
2018	6.8	6.8	6.6	6.3	6.1	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.8
2017	8.5	8.4	8.0	7.6	7.3	7.0	7.0	7.0	6.8	6.6	6.5	6.6
2016	10.2	10.2	9.9	9.4	9.1	8.7	8.5	8.4	8.3	8.2	8.2	8.2
2015	11.9	11.9	11.5	11.1	10.7	10.2	10.0	9.9	9.7	9.6	9.6	9.7
2014	13.9	13.9	13.5	13.0	12.5	12.0	11.8	11.7	11.5	11.3	11.4	11.4
2013	14.2	14.4	14.3	14.0	13.6	13.2	13.1	13.0	13.0	13.0	13.2	13.4
2012	13.2	13.4	13.3	12.9	12.6	12.3	12.3	12.4	12.4	12.5	12.9	13.4
2011	13.1	13.4	13.3	12.8	12.4	11.9	11.8	11.8	11.8	11.8	12.1	12.5
2010	12.9	13.2	13.0	12.4	12.1	11.7	11.5	11.4	11.5	11.5	11.7	12.4

Note. GUS (2020).

Table 13. *Main labour market indicators*

Specification	1950	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018
Employees (as of 31 XII) in thousands	4910	10410	10855	11250	11581	11792

Employees – annual average – in thousands	4753	9745	9823	10122	10122	10606
Registered unemployed persons (as of 31 XII) in thousands	-	1954.7	1335.2	1335.2	1081.7	968.9

Note. GUS (2019).

*(iii) patterns of economic and employment disadvantage related to gender, age, ethnicity, migrant status and other social dimensions*

One of the difficulties related to economic issues and employment disadvantage concerns women, who, despite of working in the same positions and conditions as employees receive a lower salary than man. Another problem is the maternity and paternity leave. If the mother is not entitled to maternity leave, the father cannot take advantage of the so-called paternity leave. Moreover, paternity leave is simply part of the maternity leave used by the father. The Labour Code does not contain a definition of "paternity leave", it is a colloquial phrase. This is because the father of the child may use the maternity leave, but as a rule, the mother must use the first 14 weeks after giving birth. It is also worth mentioning the difficult situation of the elderly - seniors, who, according to the analysis of the Central Statistical Office data, constituted 20 percent of the poorest Poles population between 2015 and 2018. From about 11 to 17 percent.

The share of older people in the group experiencing relative income poverty also increased - that is, the situation where the monthly net monetary income is lower than the value considered as the poverty threshold. In 2018, the income poverty line for a single-person household was PLN 1,280 per month, and for a household consisting of 2 adults and 2 children under 14 - PLN 2,688. The Central Statistical Office estimates that in 2019 up to 16 percent (from about 9% four years earlier), the percentage of elderly people among those suffering from extreme poverty has increased. Another big problem is the lack of tolerance and respect, e.g., towards people come from different country or same-sex relationships (Zik, Küpper, Hövermann, 2011).

*(iv) Patterns of education disadvantage;*

Educational inequalities in Poland begin with limited access to nursery care. Despite the real and systematic increase in the number of nurseries in the country, it is still possible to use these forms of care mainly in cities. [...], according to data from the Central Statistical Office of Poland, in 2019 78% of all care facilities for children up to 3 years of age were private sector facilities.

At the same time, it is not possible to meet the EU demand that by 2020 the share of children under 3 in nursery care should be reached by 33%, in 2019 it was only 12.4%" (*Poles' attitude to social inequalities*, 2017).

At the final stages, in terms of, inter alia, equal access to and equality of opportunities for students. The most important problems that arose in the field of education in Poland concerns: reforms introduced too hastily - without the need for other actors; changing the structure of the school without prior preparation (space, equipment, staff preparation); educational inequalities; teacher strikes - no agreement with the government; low funds for education - difficulties in adequately equipping some institutions; strong emphasis on the theoretical part - knowledge, less practical part - skills; remote and hybrid learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. technical difficulties, unequal educational opportunities); return to stationary after more than a year of e-learning.

*(v) Major social welfare trends such as disadvantage risks, welfare benefit receipt levels;*

Although the subjective level of life satisfaction among Poles is steadily increasing - still respondents declare the highest rate of dissatisfaction in terms of their earnings. „In recent years, there has been an increase in interest in indicators describing quality of life, both in Poland and in other European Union countries. Ratings of satisfaction with various aspects of personal and social life, trust in others and mental well-being are an important element in monitoring the social situation. [...] Life satisfaction covers many aspects, including financial situation, personal relationships, satisfaction with current job, time spent doing favourite activities. In the EU-SILC survey, residents of Poland additionally assessed overall life satisfaction. In this case, people assessing their satisfaction considered all those aspects which were relevant to them personally. Both in 2013 and 2018, the majority of people described positively their overall life satisfaction. [...] The greatest diversity and at the same time the lowest ratings were recorded in relation to the financial situation of the household. In 2013, about 43% of people expressed their satisfaction, and in 2018 it was close to 53%" (GUS 2019)". It is worth noting that male respondents rated satisfaction with their financial situation higher than female respondents.

The risk of poverty is more common in rural areas and smaller cities. " In 2018, the highest value of the relative poverty risk index was in rural areas (20.8%). In cities, the value decreased with the increase in the number of residents in each class of locality. The highest rate (13.5%) of people living in households below the poverty line was obtained in localities with less than 20 thousand inhabitants, the lowest (7.0%) in the largest cities (500 thousand and more inhabitants). The spread of the indicator between villages and cities in general was 10.0 percentage points." (GUS, 2019) „In 2008-2018, the relative at-risk-of-poverty rate decreased

7.1 percentage points in households with dependent children (in total). However, the situation varied between categories. The largest decrease concerned people from households with at least three children (16.8 percentage points from 34.4% in 2008 to 17.6% in 2018). However, in 2008-2015, this rate remained at a similar level (34.0% – 35.0%), which means that it was only after 2015 that positive changes in disposable income for this type of households occurred. The second largest decrease in the relative at-risk-of-poverty rate was recorded in 2008 – 2018 in households with two dependent children (a decrease of 6.4 percentage points). In this group of households, both stages, i.e. both 2008-2015 and 2015 – 2018, were significant” (GUS 2019 str. 110). „In 2018, the highest average yearly equivalised disposable income was achieved in households with one dependent child (PLN 34 842). The lowest income was observed in the case of single-parent households (PLN 23 698), followed by one-person households (PLN 25 988). The average income of people in households with children decreased along with the increase in the number of dependent children (from PLN 34 842 with one child to PLN 28 557 for at least 3 children)” (GUS, 2019).

The Supreme Audit Office in 2012-2014 carried out an audit on the operation of social welfare centres in the field of recognition and monitoring of the social situation. The audit revealed several problems both at the organizational level (too few social workers employed) and at the individual level - lack of coordinated actions at the level of specific centres. The authors of the report emphasize that: „In recent years the implementation of social welfare tasks has focused on individual social work, including procedures for granting cash benefits to alleviate the daily difficulties of individuals and families, rather than on identifying needs and seeking solutions to eliminate their causes. Due to the demographic process of aging of the population, there was a need to develop services addressed to the elderly and disabled. Preventive and activating measures for individuals and families have been pushed into the background. Measures related to the identification and monitoring of persons benefiting from the social welfare system should result in providing appropriate and real assistance to the needs. The mechanisms applied should mobilize and activate them and influence their attitudes and increase readiness for active participation in public life” (NIK, 2015).

The actions taken by the audited social assistance centers did not ensure proper and effective identification and monitoring of the social situation of persons in need of assistance. Social assistance centers (OPS) did not have full knowledge about persons to whom social assistance should be addressed. The reason was the insufficient activity of the centers in obtaining such information, lack of coherent and rational principles of monitoring the social environment and cooperation with entities that might know that scope. In many cases, OPS while organizing social assistance, did not sufficiently cooperate with social and non-government organizations and other entities. The cooperation was usually of a superficial

character, and was generally not documented and was often limited to receiving information on situations requiring intervention used the possibilities of "acting ex officio" (NIK, 2015).

Table 14. *Household's difficulties with satisfying their needs in 2018*

SPECIFICATION	One-week annual holiday <sup>a</sup>	Meal with meat or fish every second day	Keeping home adequately warm
% of households declaring no possibility to satisfy a certain need			
TOTAL	35.1	6,3	6,6
Socio-economic groups of:			
Employees	26.0	3,7	4,1
Farmers	49.7	.	.
Self-employed	17.3	.	.
Retirees	44.5	7.6	8.1
Pensioners	65.1	18.7	18.4
Living on unearned sources	61.6	18.9	18.1
Class of locality:			
urban total	28.5	5.6	6.2
town by size in thousand:			

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500 and more	17.9	3.9	3.9
499-200	25.9	4.9	6.8
199-100	26.8	6.8	7.5
99-20	32.3	6.2	6.1
less than 20	37.0	6.2	7.4
Rural	48.6	7.8	7.4
Macroregions (NUTS 1):			
Central	40.9	9.3	9.2
South	34.1	7.4	7.7
Eastern	46.9	9.2	7.4
north-west	35.0	4.8	7.0
south-west	27.1	3.9	5.5
North	34.4	4.7	5.5
masovian district	28.9	5.3	4.2

a. This is also to the second house /dwelling, holiday home or to the family, acquaintances.

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Note GUS, 2019

Table 15. *Family benefits and alimony fund benefits in 2018*

SPECIFICATION	Average monthly number of benefits in thousands	Expenditure in thousands PLN	Average monthly benefit in PLN
Total family benefits	x	10 017 749	X
Family allowance	2 194.74	2 983 387	113.28
Supplement to the family allowance <sup>a)</sup> due to:	1 026.52	1 431 449	116.21
Giving birth to a child <sup>b)</sup>	13.02	120 440	771.10
Taking care of a child during child-care leave	55.34	250 023	376.48
Single parenthood	96.32	219 240	189.69
Education and rehabilitation of a disabled child	134.48	166 652	103.27
Beginning of a school year <sup>b)</sup>	201.81	145 181	59.95
Undertaking education outside the place of residence by a child	183.66	153 176	69.50
Multi-children parenthood	341.89	376 738	91.83
Nursing allowance	911.32	1 730 289	158.22
Nursing benefit	131.18	2 311 086	1 468.14
Special attendance allowance	42.40	269 076	528.83

One-off subsidy due to giving birth to a child <sup>b</sup>	23.26	279 144	1 000.00
Childbirth benefit and other family benefits paid from own funds of gminas	1.98	13 903	583.97
Parental benefit	91.39	999 415	911.33
Contributions to retirement and pension insurance	132.19	505 269	318.51
Alimony fund benefits	258.60	1 237 026	398.62

a) Including supplements paid from the funds of gminas.

b) One-off paid allowance, data were converted to average monthly amount.

Note. GUS – Central Statistical Office (2019), data of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy.

*(vi) Housing problems;*

IBRiS research commissioned by Habitat Poland shows that no housing or poor housing conditions are in (IBRiS - Public opinion survey: Housing problems of Polish women and Poles and evaluation of existing solutions, 2018):

- village – 32.1%
- small town up to 50 000 residents – 27.1%
- medium city 50-250 thousand residents – 44.5%
- large city 250-500 thousand residents – 53.7%
- metropolis over 500 000 residents – 59.9%

*Summary: The broader socio-economic context and trends which influences children's, parental and family circumstances and environments*

Nowadays, the major problem affecting children's, parental, and family circumstances and environments is the difficulty of the COVID-19 pandemic. It caused not only numerous

economic/financial difficulties - e.g. increased family expenses, job loss, but also difficulties related to ensuring appropriate care for children in the event of closing e.g. schools and kindergartens, enabling access to online education, as well as mental difficulties, e.g. pandemic stress or sudden loss of a loved one due to illness.

However, among the main problems indicated by Polish families in 2018 (IBriS - Public opinion survey, 2018), were:

- lack of an efficient health service – 79%;
- low earnings – 51%;
- lack of housing or poor housing conditions – 40%;
- lack of an adequate number of nurseries in kindergartens – 33%;
- unemployment – 15%;
- no concern for the natural environment – 14%;
- citizens' insecurity – 12%.

#### **20.4. The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions and actors' which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision:**

- *Membership to the EU; YES*
- *Relationship with European Union*

Poland is a full member of the European Union since 1 May 2004 - under the Accession Treaty signed in Athens on April 16, 2003. There are 52 members of the European Parliament from Poland.

21 representatives on the European Economic and Social Committee (this advisory body – representing employers, workers, and other interest groups – is consulted on proposed laws, to get a better idea of the possible changes to work and social situations in member countries) and 21 representatives on the European Committee of the Regions (this advisory body is consulted on proposed laws, to ensure these laws take account of the perspective from each region of the EU).

Also, permanent representation in Brussels gives Poland a chance to communicate with the EU institutions. The main task, as Poland's "embassy to the EU" is to ensure that the

country's interests and policies are pursued as effectively as possible in the EU (GUS – Central Statistical Office, 2020).

- *Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy*

The most influential political party in Poland is PIS – Prawo i Sprawiedliwość and the leader: Jarosław Kaczyński and the president: Andrzej Duda. Their orientation to family policy, support and social policy focused on: protection and support of families with dependent children, in particular, families in a difficult financial and social situation; protection and support for seniors – e.g. “Senior+” program; preventing pathologies; social benefits care of the child under 3 years old; demographic conditions in country and fighting against the coronavirus pandemic (GUS – Central Statistical Office, 2020).

The second largest political group in Poland is PO – Platforma Obywatelska. In the years when this party ruled in Poland, the main activities around family policy focused on the following areas: health care, education, housing policy, on the labour market and within the framework of tax policy in order to obtain a package ensuring the preservation of work despite having children, increasing family budgets by relieving them (elimination of various costs) and maximum ease in everyday functioning. Basic assumption was that for parents, the most important thing is work - providing the family with support - and a sense of security for their children. They introduced changes to ensure parents that the state provides care for their children and a good start in life resulting from proper education.

- *influential lobbying groups*
- *influential campaigning groups,*

The influence of different campaigning groups is changing every few years. It is related to, inter alia, with election results and most citizens' votes. The three most influential campaigning groups in Poland are: PRAWO I SPRAWIEDLIWOŚĆ (PIS) (LAW AND JUSTICE), KOALICJA OBYWATELSKA (KO) (CITIZENS COALITION), LEWICA (LEFT).

Table 16. *Political parties – political lobbying groups in Poland*

NAME	SHORTCUT	LEADER	PARLIAMENT	SENATE	IDEOLOGY
Prawo i Sprawiedliwość	PiS	Jarosław Kaczyński	198	44	national conservatism, solidarity
Platforma Obywatelska	PO	Borys Budka	111	40	Christian democracy, social liberalism, liberal conservatism, pro-Europeanism
Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej	SLD	Włodzimierz Czarzasty	24	0	social democracy, social liberalism, pro-Europeanism
Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe	PSL	Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz	20	2	agrarianism, Christian democracy, centrism
Solidarna Polska	SP	Zbigniew Ziobro	19	2	solidarity, national conservatism, euroscepticism
Wiosna		Robert Biedroń	19	1	social democracy, social liberalism, green politics, anti-clericalism, pro-Europeanism
Porozumienie		Jarosław Gowin	18	2	conservative liberalism,

					Christian democracy
Konfederacja Wolność i Niepodległość	Konfederacja	Janusz Korwin-Mikke, Robert Winnicki, Grzegorz Braun	11	0	national conservatism, paleolibertarianism, hard euroscepticism, nationalism
Nowoczesna	.N	Adam Szałapka	8	1	liberalism, centrism, pro-Europeanism
Lewica Razem	Razem		6	0	social democracy, democratic socialism
Koalicja Odnowy Rzeczypospolitej Wolność i Nadzieja <sup>[6]</sup>	KORWiN	Janusz Korwin-Mikke	5	0	conservative liberalism, hard euroscepticism, regionalism
Ruch Narodowy	RN	Robert Winnicki	5	0	national conservatism, hard euroscepticism, national Catholicism, nationalism
Inicjatywa Polska	iPL	Barbara Nowacka	4	0	social liberalism, social democracy, anti-clericalism, pro-Europeanism
Partia Zieloni	Zieloni	Wojciech Kubalewski, Małgorzata Tracz	3	0	green politics, feminism, pacifism, pro-Europeanism

Unia Europejskich Demokratów	UED	Elżbieta Bińczycka	1	1	centrism, pro-Europeanism, social liberalism
Konfederacja Korony Polskiej	KKP	Grzegorz Braun	1	0	traditionalism, monarchism, reactionism, hard euroscepticism
Regionalna. Mniejszość z Większością	RMW	Ryszard Galla	1	0	regionalism, Christian democracy, centrism
Polska Partia Socjalistyczna	PPS	Wojciech Konieczny	0	1	democratic socialism

Note. State election commission and national election office. Retrieved December 8, 2020 from [www.pkw.gov.pl](http://www.pkw.gov.pl)

- *influential policy/research networks*

The most popular and influential policy/research networks in Poland are:

- UNICEF Poland, <https://m.unicef.pl/>
- Committee for the Protection of Children's Rights, <http://kopd.pl/>
- International Social Service Poland, <http://isspolska.org/>
- Commissioner for the Children's Rights, [www.brpd.gov.pl](http://www.brpd.gov.pl)
- Kidprotect.pl Foundation, <http://lozbjn.edu.pl/bi/kidprotect.html>
- SYNAPSIS Foundation, [www.synapsis.waw.pl](http://www.synapsis.waw.pl)
- We Give Children Power Foundation, (Dzieci Niczyje Foundation, [www.fdn.pl](http://www.fdn.pl))
- Monar Association, <http://www.monar.org/>
- Kulczyk Foundation, <https://kulczykfoundation.org.pl/o-fundacji>
- Women's Rights Centre, <https://cpk.org.pl/>

- Polish Youth Children Foundation, <http://www.pcyf.org.pl/>
- «Support» Foundation, <http://fundacjawsparcie.eu/>
- Family Assistance Foundation «A Man in Need», <http://www.czlowiekwpotrzebie.org/pl/>
- Family for Family Foundation, <https://www.facebook.com/FamilyForFamily/>
- Helsinki Human Rights Foundation, <https://www.hfhr.pl/>

The most important research centres/university:

- University of Warsaw
- University of Bialystok
- University of Gdansk
- Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan
- Jagiellonian University in Cracow
- University of Lodz
- Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin
- Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń
- University of Wroclaw
- Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw
- Special Education Akademia M. Grzegorzewska in Warsaw
- University of Humanities and Life Sciences J. Długosz in Częstochowa
- Pedagogical University of National Education Commission in Cracow
- *The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support*

The structure of the Polish state is determined by the Constitution of the Republic of Poland. According to this document Poland is a parliamentary republic, based on: independence and sovereignty of the state; democratic state of law; civil society; pluralism; rule of law; social market economy; inherent human dignity and sharing the power. In the context of family the most important are: The Legislative Committee in Poland are Sejm and Senate, Executive - The Council of Ministers and the President and Judicial - Courts and Tribunals. A special role in the context of government support for the family is played by: the Ministry of Family and Social

Policy – responsible for supporting the family, children and seniors, providing, carrying out financial and preventive aid activities, creating various types of projects, in accordance with the observed needs of recipients.

- *the democratic system and main political parties; unitary vs federal state structures; centralised vs decentralised structures)*

In Poland there is a democratic system. The most important are president and the government. Their position is clearly separated according to the rules of the parliamentary system. The president is the head of state; it is chosen by the nation in general elections for a 5-year term (re-election is allowed only once).

The main political parties are:

- PRAWO I SPRAWIEDLIWOŚĆ (PIS) (LAW AND JUSTICE) – 235 mandates in the national Parliament;
- KOALICJA OBYWATELSKA (KO) (CITIZENS COALITION)– 134 mandates in the national Parliament;
- LEWICA (LEFT) – 49 mandates in the national Parliament;
- PSL – KUKIZ 15 (POLISH PEOPLE’S PARTY – KUKIZ 15) – 30 mandates in the national Parliament;
- KONFEDERACJA (CONFEDERATION) – 11 mandates in the national Parliament;
- MNIEJSZOŚĆ NIEMIECKA (GERMAN MINORITY) – 1 mandate in the national Parliament (The Sejm of the Republic of Poland, 2020).
- *The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular (e.g. Ministry roles, national vs local/regional government roles*

The institutional framework for the family support exist on two main levels:

- NATIONAL LEVEL: The Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Policy, <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/co-robimy-wsparcie-dla-rodzin-z-dziecmi>; Family social services; National programs and projects; Children’s rights; Education – early child education and care.
- LOCAL/REGIONAL LEVEL: Nurseries, kindergartens and schools; Psychological and pedagogical counselling centres; Mental health clinics; Health centres;

Environmental and sociotherapeutic day care centres; Foundations, associations; Helplines.

In this context the really important is law which regulates a number of matters relating to the family and its support, e.g.: Convention on the Rights of the Child; Constitution of the Republic of Poland; European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights; European Convention on the Adoption of Children; Regulations and Acts (including on preventing domestic violence, on sobriety upbringing and on counteracting alcoholism, on organizing early support for children's development); Big Family Card; Family and Guardianship Code; Convention for the Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms Protection.

- *The ways in and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policymaking and reviews*

No data

**20.5 List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year 2000. For each policy document indicate**

- (a) whether participation of families and young people has been mentioned in the document
- (b) the extent to which such participation has been implemented

- THE ACT ON FAMILY SUPPORT AND THE Foster care system - 9 June 2011

“The Act specifies:

- 1) the rules and forms of supporting a family experiencing difficulties in fulfilling its care and educational functions;
- 2) rules and forms of foster care and assistance in making adult foster children independent;
- 3) tasks of public administration in supporting the family and foster care system;
- 4) principles of financing support for the family and foster care system;
- 5) tasks in the field of adoption proceedings”.

ISAP - INTERNET SYSTEM OF LEGAL ACTS. Retrieved 12 12, 2020 from <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=wdu20111490887>

- THE ACT ON THE CARE OF CHILDREN UP TO THE AGE OF 3 – 4 February 2011

“The Act specifies:

- 1) The rules for the organization and functioning of care for children up to 3 years of age;
- 2) Terms of services provided;
- 3) The qualifications of carers;
- 4) Principles of financing care;
- 5) Supervision over the conditions and quality of care provided”.

ISAP - INTERNET SYSTEM OF LEGAL ACTS. Retrieved 12 12, 2020 from <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=wdu20110450235>

- THE ACT ON THE STATE AID IN RAISING CHILDREN of February 11, 2016

“The Act defines the conditions for acquiring the right to child benefit as well as the rules for granting and paying this benefit”.

ISAP - INTERNET SYSTEM OF LEGAL ACTS. Retrieved 12 12, 2020 from <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20160000195>

- ACT ON THE PREVENTION OF FAMILY VIOLENCE of 29 July 2005

“The Act specifies:

- 1) tasks related to counteracting domestic violence;
- 2) rules of conduct towards people affected by domestic violence;
- 3) rules of conduct towards people using domestic violence”.

ISAP - INTERNET SYSTEM OF LEGAL ACTS. Retrieved 12 12, 2020 from <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20051801493>

- ACT ON SUPPORT FOR PREGNANT WOMEN AND FAMILIES "FOR LIFE" of November 4, 2016

“The Act defines the rights of pregnant women and families to support in the scope of access to:

- 1) healthcare services;
- 2) policy instruments for the family”..

ISAP - INTERNET SYSTEM OF LEGAL ACTS. Retrieved 12 12, 2020 from <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20160001860>

- THE ACT ON THE LARGE FAMILY CARD of 5 December 2014

“The Act defines the rules for granting large family members a Large Family Card, hereinafter referred to as the "Card", the method of granting them rights and the manner of implementing and financing tasks resulting from the Act.

The rights of persons holding a valid Card consist in granting more favorable than generally applicable access to goods, services or other forms of activity”.

ISAP - INTERNET SYSTEM OF LEGAL ACTS. Retrieved 12 12, 2020 from <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20140001863>

## **20.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services:**

### *(i) The priorities in child welfare and family policy*

The main actions taken by the government to support child and family revolve around:

- "good start" benefits - equalization of educational opportunities;
- payment of family benefits, development of services for families and cooperation with NGOs promoting families;
- payment of additional benefits, travel vouchers - COVID-19 pandemic;
- support for family foster care;
- creating new care places for the youngest children - the "Toddler +" program;
- influencing the number of births - taking care of the birth rate;
- support for seniors.

### *(ii) The main types of family provision and support and key features (e.g. different types of cash support (universal and targeted, work-family reconciliation measures and children's/family services, child care etc)*

The assumption of the primacy of the family is evident, therefore the legal documents in Poland assume many actions directed to the inside of the family (e.g. support in the form of a family assistant). In the Polish context, the family is the primary and most important environment for children, and the parent has full authority over the child (the child belongs to parents, not the

state) - this context gives direction to the creation of legislative interventions designed to protect and support the child.

#### “FAMILY 500+”

The "Rodzina 500+" program is the financial foundation for supporting families. The program came into force on April 1, 2016 and significantly improved the material situation of families, strengthened them and gave them due priority.

#### PROGRAMME “DOBRY START” – “THE GOOD START”

The "Good Start" program is an investment in the education of Polish children. It is 300 PLN one-time support for all students starting the school year. Families will receive benefits regardless of income. This support for 4.6 million students.

#### PROGRAMME “MALUCH +” – “THE TODDLER +”

The "Toddler +" program supports the development of childcare institutions under the age of 3 - nurseries, children's clubs and day carers. Program beneficiaries may receive funding for the creation and operation of care places. "Toddler +" is an annual program.

#### CHILD CARE UP TO 3 YEARS OLD

Here, information on childcare for children up to 3 years of age will be found by parents, entities running or intending to run childcare institutions up to 3 years of age, municipalities.

#### BIG FAMILY CARD

A system of discounts and additional entitlements for families 3+. The Big Family Card functions in both public institutions and private companies.

#### FAMILY BENEFITS

Family benefits, i.e. family allowance and family allowance supplements, care allowance (nursing allowance, nursing benefit, special care allowance), one-off childbirth assistance (so-called 'becikowy'), parental benefit to which the right is acquired in the manner specified in Act of 28 November 2003 on family benefits.

#### PROGRAMME “ZA ŻYCIEM” – “BEHIND LIFE”

"Behind Life" Program

Check what rights you have under the Act on supporting pregnant women and families  
"For life"

- Support for a family experiencing difficulties in fulfilling caring and educational functions.

A family who faces difficulties in fulfilling caring and educational functions is supported by the head of commune, mayor and city president, respectively. The family may receive support through the activities of: institutions and entities acting for the benefit of the child and the family, day support facilities; supporting families.

- Family benefits,

i.e. family allowance and family allowance supplements, care allowance (nursing allowance, nursing benefit, special care allowance), one-off childbirth assistance (so-called 'becikowy'), parental benefit to which the right is acquired in the manner specified in Act of 28 November 2003 on family benefits.

- Alimony fund

Benefits from the maintenance fund are granted under the conditions set out in the Act of 7 September 2007 on assistance to persons entitled to maintenance. Pursuant to the provisions of this Act, material support is provided to persons entitled to maintenance who do not receive them due to the ineffectiveness of enforcement. This support is implemented by granting benefits from the alimony fund to persons who meet the statutory criteria (e.g. income criterion) (Service of Poland, 2020).

*(iii) The types of funding involved such as state, charity vs private sector providers and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners.*

Year after year, we have seen an increase in the participation of charities and for-profit organizations in the area of family support. „In 2016, In Poland, there were 112.7 thousand units providing social services in such fields as: social assistance and childcare, social and vocational integration services, healthcare, education, culture and sport. [...] The particular high increase of the total number was noted among units providing services in the field of social services and childcare (9.3%)” (Statistics Poland, Statistical Office, 2018). Most of the activities that support families are government and local government activities. Participation of non-profit organizations, charitable organizations is visible and functions in the public consciousness it is dominant. Participation of public policy organizations is visible mainly in organizing daycare for children (41.9%) and in running specialized institutions (here as much as 55.4%). „In 2016, almost 3 million people were covered by the activities of non-profit organizations, which mainly operated in the field of social assistance and childcare”. They mainly focus on organizing the leisure time of their charges. The activities proposed by NGOs concern sports and cultural events. Often the support offered by NGOs is a non-institutionalized form.

Retrieved 30 01, 2021 from <http://mcps.com.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Rola-sektora-non-profit-w-dostarczaniu-uslug-w-latach-2014-2016.pdf>

*(iv) Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations.*

According to available data, monitoring and evaluations are carried out by individual/institutions, however, they are not always publicly available.

*(v) Limitations in national and official data and statistics.*

Many non-profit organisations, as well as the Supreme Audit Office, point out in their reports that there is not enough data collected at the government level.

**20.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision. What are the prominent policy and practice developments related to family support services from children's rights, social equality and evidence-informed perspectives?**

A certain tendency in family and social policy can be observed. Aid is often reduced to the payment of benefits and allowances (one-time and cyclical), tax reliefs, or large family cards are introduced. However, there are still no systemic solutions - guaranteed places in public nurseries and kindergartens, or maternity care. In Poland, there are still children who remain in foster care even though they are qualified to be placed in a foster family.

Although on the legislative level pregnant women and women in the postpartum period have legal protection, for example, NIK (Supreme Chamber of Control) audits have shown problems with the implementation of the recommendations - for example, in the number of medical services provided (necessary examinations, etc.). The NIK report "Availability of gynaecological-obstetric services financed from public funds in rural areas" published in 2017 showed several problems and difficult access to a specialist doctor (gynaecologist) during pregnancy and lack of conducted appropriate examinations during pregnancy. This has a direct impact on the rate of deaths among children per thousand births. This problem also affects women living in cities - among other things, the activities of the Childbirth with Dignity Foundation aim to improve the quality of perinatal care, especially in the context of respecting the rights of the patient and accessibility to medical procedures (e.g., anaesthesia).

The announcement of the "For Life" program was met with considerable criticism. It concerned, among other things, the idea of a one-off payment for persons whose child has a severe and irreversible handicap or an incurable life-threatening illness, which arose in the prenatal period of the child's development or during childbirth. At the same time, care allowance and nursing benefits for parents of children with disabilities are currently very low. In addition,

critics of the government program will emphasize the fact that at the moment in vitro treatment is not refunded.

There is an ongoing debate about domestic violence in Poland. Unfortunately, this problem is often ignored and underestimated, and we still do not have sufficient means to prevent domestic violence. Recently, in the public debate, there have been voices advocating the denunciation of the Istanbul Convention by Poland. Still, many legislative solutions function only in theory.

The nationwide program has been in operation since 2014 and applies to families with three or more children. What is important is that local programs initiated by local governments are also implemented in parallel. These are complementary and independent undertakings. One can have a nationwide Large Family Card (KDR) and benefit from discounts throughout the country and additionally benefit from discounts under local programs. The Large Family Card is a system of discounts and additional entitlements for families of 3+, both in public institutions and in private companies. KDR holders have the opportunity to use the offer of entities from such sectors as food, fuel, banking, or recreation more cheaply. KDR supports the budgets of families with many children and facilitates access to goods and services. The program is part of the government's policy promoting large families (NIK, 2019).

The main points related to this topic are:

- from a social equality perspective
  - social equality - people of different cultures and denominations
  - social equality - people of different nationalities
  - social equality - people of different sexual orientations
  - social equality - women and men
  - social equality - families with different material statuses
  - social equality - equalizing educational opportunities for children
  - social equality – due to political views

In 2014, the Sejm analysis office published monographs on social inequalities in Poland [http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/WydBAS.nsf/0/1412E4FC234B9679C1257DE0004904F8/\\$file/Nierownosci\\_spoleczne.pdf](http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/WydBAS.nsf/0/1412E4FC234B9679C1257DE0004904F8/$file/Nierownosci_spoleczne.pdf)

According to the CBOS report, it will not be possible for Poland to meet the EU demand for children under 3 in nursery care before 2020 (in 2019 Poland reached only 12.4% at the same time EU demands 33%). The private sector's share of care for children under age 3 is also alarming, and in 2019 it remained at 78% according to data from the Central Statistical Office of Poland (see. CBOS - Public Opinion Research Centre, 2017).

- evidence-informed standpoint

Some of them are supported by research results, but not all.

- from children's rights perspective

In September 2020, in response to the Government report on the implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, an alternative report has been prepared. As we can read on the UNICEF Polska website, "The Alternative Report has been developed by 13 leading Polish non-governmental organizations. The organizations point out that a large part of the Recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child from 2015, unfortunately, did not live to see implementation." The Committee on the Rights of the Child will take into account both reports (governmental and non-governmental organizations) when preparing Recommendations for Poland.

The authors of the alternative report draw attention to the lack of "essential elements in Poland that are necessary for an effective policy for children". What is necessary is to be created and enforced "a strategy for actions for children, a mechanism coordinating these actions, monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a budget for children, and a data collection system that would include all areas of a child's life. Such conclusions can be drawn from the report of non-governmental organizations in Poland" (UNICEF Polska and others, 2020). The Alternative Report identified the problem of discrimination against LGBT people (which also affects school children and youth). It is linked to the broader problem of a lack of anti-discrimination and hate crime legislation and implementation. Another glaring shortcoming is the situation of refugees in Poland. "Since 2015, Poland has not had a migration policy - the draft of the new Polish migration policy prepared in 2019 by the Migration Team of the Ministry of Interior and Administration does not take into account the issue of securing the best interests of a foreign child. In addition, children's rights are not implemented in the context of foster care and the functioning and support of people with disabilities (including children with special educational needs)" (UNICEF Polska and others, 2020).

Retrieved January 30, 2021 from <https://unicef.pl/co-robimy/aktualnosci/dla-mediow/raport-alternatywny-2020>.

1. What are the pressing policy, practice and research challenges impeding developments?

- governance dominated by representatives of one political party,
- introducing changes too quickly (without prior preparation),
- not enough consultation and reflection,
- insufficient number of consultations with professionals and researchers,
- lack of a coherent policy of support for families,
- an extensive administrative system with a simultaneous staff shortage (example of family assistants with families waiting in line in Poland, or overburdened social workers),
- frequent lack of cooperation between individuals, inconsistent activities for the benefit of the family,
- bad situation in psychiatry and mental health care and, above all, children, and adolescents psychiatry,
- during the pandemic, schools do not function stationary, and they additionally play educational and care functions, some students have dropped out of the education system (e.g., due to economic exclusion: no computer, lack of a permanent Internet connection), domestic violence problem.

2. What are the pressing gaps in provision?

- support for all families (not just those in need or at risk),
- caring for the best interests of the child from an early age (appropriate support and care centres, easy access),
- cooperation of various entities to support the child and the family - joint and comprehensive activities,
- support for children with disabilities and their families,
- psychological support for parents and children,
- caring for equality (women / men, their roles, models of family life, etc.) - preventing discrimination,
- specific variety of different support forms - easy access to them,

- legal and formal framework - clear and accessible to everyone.

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## 21 PORTUGAL - National report on family support policy & provision

**Marisa Matias & Ana Tomas Almeida**

### 21.1 Trends and issues related to demography

#### 1.1 Fertility rates

Portuguese fertility rates were among the highest in Europe during the 70s, but this has declined severely after the 1980s and 1990s, in contrast with some other European countries where the fertility rates were increasing during this period. After 2000, the fertility rate has stabilised below 1.4. Portugal has one of the lowest fertility rates in all OCDE, and is among the group of countries with the smallest number of births.

Table 1. *Fertility rates*

Year	Fertility rate
2010	1.39
2015	1.31
2016	1.36
2017	1.38
2018	1.42
2019	N/A

#### 1.2 Families with children by number of children

Overall, in the last decade the number of households with children shows a slight descendant curve, contrasting with the upward trend in the number of households without children. Households with children are predominantly families with one child.

Table 2. *Households by number of children*

Year	Number of children (%)			
	0	1	2	3+
2010	48.8	30.1	17.4	3.7
2015	50.2	30.0	16.8	3.0
2016	50.5	29.6	16.8	3.1
2017	51.5	28.3	17.0	3.1
2018	52.4	27.8	16.5	3.3
2019	52.4	28.0	16.4	3.2

*Source:* Eurostat (2020)

### 1.3 Percentage of the population from 0 to 19

The percentage of the population aged 19 or under has steadily lowered during the last decade, and is currently at 19.1%. This figure represents a minus of 1.6% in this age group. Likewise, Portugal follows the trends of other European countries of an aging population. The old-age dependency ratio in 2019 between the age groups 15-64 vs +65 years is of 33.9% and it increases to 53.9% if we compare the 20-50 vs +60 years of age groups. Indeed, for 2050, it is expected that 40% of the Portuguese population will be 65 or older, and Portugal will be the fourth oldest country in the world, after Japan, South Korea, and Spain (United Nations, 2015).

Table 3. *Population aged 19 or under*

Year	%
2010	20.7
2015	19.7
2016	19.5
2017	19.4
2018	19.2
2019	19.1

#### *1.4 Percentage of the population over working (retiring) age*

The share of the population aged 65 or above has been increasing in the past decade; indeed, year by year, the figures are higher, signalling the expansion of this age group.

Table 4. *Population over working age (proportion of population aged 65 or more)*

Year	%
2010	18.3
2015	20.3
2016	20.7

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2017	21.1
2018	21.5
2019	21.8

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### *1.5 Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities:*

Although the migrant population is increasing in Europe, it is important to note that the percentages of foreign-born population is around 8% in Portugal which is not high when compared with other European countries. More so, when looking at children under five where the percentages are around 4%. If one considers the percentage of foreign-born children (under five) in the total number of children, Portugal shows only approximately 1.5% of foreign-born children. Thus, the overall picture indicates that Portugal is not, in comparative terms, under significant pressure due to large proportions of foreign-born population or children.

As Nata and Cadima (2019) posed these numbers certainly underestimate the cultural diversity within a country, as a particular national (ethnic) minority is not reflected in these statistics: Gypsy communities. Please note that, within the Portuguese context, the term Gypsy is preferable to the term Roma. There is no official number of the Portuguese Gypsy population, as it is forbidden by the Portuguese law to identify citizens based upon their ethnicity. Some estimates have been set forth ranging from approximately 0.2% to 2% of the Portuguese population, respectively.

This minority is the most impoverished one within the Portuguese population, as well as the most discriminated against, compared to other ethnic/migrant groups in Portugal (Nata & Cadima, 2019)

### *1.6 Migration patterns*

If until 1980 Portugal was essentially a country of emigration and at the beginning of the 1990s 30% of all Portuguese lived or worked abroad; in 2017 there were 38,273 persons considered to be permanent emigrants (emigrants for more than one year) and 29,925 permanent immigrants. In 2015, 388,732 foreigners were living in Portugal, representing around 4% of the population, with Portuguese-speaking communities being the most represented ones (Brazil, Cape Verde, Angola, and Guinea Bissau) alongside with immigrants from Ukraine. Foreign communities living in Portugal are, nevertheless, diversified, including citizens of over 150 countries. The share of children immigrants has been varying between 12 and 16%.

The flux of emigrants is still high, as the rate of transnational mobility has been increasing with more qualified youth trying to find a job in the European Union.

Table 5. *Number of Immigrants*

Year	Number of Immigrants					
	Total	Aged under 15	%	From countries with low HDI	From countries with low HDI (aged under 15)	%
2013	17,554	2392	13.6	1895	304	16.0
2014	19,516	2395	12.3	1828	263	14.4
2015	29,896	4050	13.5	3433	476	13.9
2016	29,925	4071	13.6	4629	605	13.1
2017	36,639	4755	13.0	3356	469	14.0
2018	43,170	5274	12.2	6224	750	12.1

## 21.2 Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles and children's living arrangements

### 2.1 *Family household types*

Available data show an increase in households composed of one adult and couples without children and a decrease in households of couples with children. This trend was already identified in Table 2 regarding the number of households with children and is also related to the decline in fertility rates previously mentioned. In addition, it is relevant to note the increase in the number of single parent families and single person households with individuals older than 65 years.

Table 6. *Household types*

Year	Aver-age household size	Single person households	Couple without children	Couple with children	Single parent families	Other	Single person household aged 65 or + (from the total of single person households)
2010	2.7	18.0	23.5	38.8	8.7	10.9	N/A
2015	2.7	21.6	23.6	35.7	10.4	8.6	52.8
2016	2.7	21.7	23.4	35.5	10.7	8.7	54.0
2017	2.6	22.1	23.9	35.0	10.7	8.2	54.4
2018	2.6	22.7	24.3	34.0	11.1	7.9	54.1
2019	N/A	22.5	24.8	33.8	11.1	7.8	54.9

Source: National Statistics Office (2020a)

## 2.2 *Marriage and divorce rates*

Marriage and divorce rates have been stable in the past decade, nevertheless the marriage crude rate has a decrease and women's age at first marriage an increase. The marriage rate is lower than the EU-28 average (4.4 in 2016) but the divorce rate is higher than this average (1.9 in 2015). Indeed, the number of divorces per 100 marriages in Portugal has shown values as high as 72, on 2015, which is significantly higher than the EU-28 average (43.1 in 2015).

Table 7. *Marriage and divorce statistics*

Year	Marriage rate	Divorce rate	Women's age at first marriage	Number of divorces/100 marriages
2010	3.8	2.6	27.7	69.8
2015	3.1	2.3	30.2	72.2
2016	3.1	2.2	30.4	69.0
2017	3.3	2.1	30.7	64.2
2018	3.4	2.0	31.1	N/A
2019	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

### 2.3 Lone-parent families

The average household size has been constant as seen on table 6; but the number of single-parent families has been increasing.

### 2.4 New family forms

Same-sex marriage was legally approved in 2010 (Decree Law n°9/2010) and from that date on the marriage rate have been steadily increasing.

Table 8. *Same-sex marriages*

Year	Marriage rate
2010	266
2015	350
2016	422
2017	523

2018 607

2019 677

Source: National Statistics Office (2020b)

### 2.5 Family structures and changes across social groups;

See section 2.1

### 2.6 and 2.7 children and youth living in institutions, in out-of-home care such as foster care; home-based support.

The legal framework for children and youth protection had a significant update (Decree Law n° 142/2015) during the last decade which have contributed to improve deinstitutionalization, avoiding long institutionalization periods and offering more support to children and families. Thus, there is a decrease in the number of children in institutions, and also an accentuated decrease from 2010 to 2018 in home-based care.

A note of concern regards the number of children living in specialized institutions (youth between 12-17 years with severe emotional difficulties and disruptive behaviours) which has increased and reached full capacity in the past years. This indicator is worrying since the number of institutionalized youth and children with mental health difficulties has been increasing (CASA, 2019).

Table 9. *Children in Institutions or out-of-home care*

Year	In Institutions	In specialized institutions <sup>1</sup>	Home base care	Other type of foster care
2010	8219	N/A	553	N/A
2015	7617	60	303	N/A
2016	7203	72	261	N/A
2017	6583	94	246	630

2018	6118	97	200	617
2019	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

<sup>1</sup> Youth between 12-17 years with severe emotional difficulties and disruptive behaviours

Source: CASA, (2019)

Table 10. *Children in institutions by age*

Year	0 - 3	4 - 5	6 - 9	10 - 11	12 - 14	15 - 17	18 - 20	21 - 24
2017	616	287	696	519	1447	2735	1253	0
2018	578	273	639	479	1318	2509	1096	140

Source: CASA (2019)

## 21.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare

### 3.1 Poverty rates

Poverty rates for the population have been under 20%, and show a slight decrease in the last two years of data (2017-2018); however, poverty or social exclusion of individuals under 18 have been over 20% with a steadily decrease in the past eight years.

Severe material deprivation also shows a declining trend across the past years.

Table 11. *Socioeconomic disadvantages rates*

Year	At risk of poverty <sup>1</sup>	At risk of poverty or social exclusion	At risk of poverty or social exclusion (< 18 y)	Severe material deprivation	Severe material deprivation (< 18 y)
2010	17.9	25.3	28.7	9.0	10.8

2015	19.5	26.6	29.6	9.6	11.0
2016	19.0	25.1	27.0	8.4	9.6
2017	18.3	23.3	24.2	6.9	7.4
2018	17.3	21.6	21.9	6.0	5.7
2019	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

<sup>1</sup> Cut-off point: 60% of median equalized income after social transfers)

### 3.2 Employment/unemployment rates

Employment rates have been increasing slightly while unemployment is decreasing. Nevertheless, in 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these numbers are following an inverse trend.

Table 12. (Un)Employment rates (15-64 years of age)

Year	Total employment	Total unemployment
2010	65.3	12.0
2015	63.9	12.6
2016	65.2	11.2
2017	67.8	9.0
2018	69.7	7.0
2019	N/A	N/A

### 3.3 Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage related to gender, age, and migrant status

While unemployment rates of young people (15-24 years of age) have been increasing; employment rates have had a decrease from 2010 to 2017 and a slight increase from 2017 to 2019. A turning point around 2016 has been observed both for men and women, i.e., an increase in unemployment rates until 2016 and a decrease afterwards. This is likely related to the alleviation of financial restriction measures that were imposed in Portugal, in the preceding years, by Troika (including the European Commission (EC) the European Central Bank (ECB) and the international Monetary Fund (IMF)).

Nevertheless, women's unemployment rates are always higher than men's are.

Data on immigrants' employment situation is scarce; the available data by the OECD shows that in 2018 the unemployment was of 8.5, and the employment of 75.1 (OECD, 2019). In light of this, a trend cannot be reported.

Table 13. (Un)Employment rates by gender and age groups

Year	Employment (15-24 y)	Unemployment (15-24 y)	Employment Men (vs women)	Employment Men aged 15 or +	Employment Women aged 15 or +	Unemployment Men	Unemployment rate women
2010	6.6	16.1	52.5	60.7	49.2	9.8	11.9
2015	5.5	18.3	51.3	56.2	46.9	12.2	12.7
2016	5.7	17.8	51.3	56.9	47.5	11.0	11.2
2017	5.9	19.1	51.3	59.0	49.0	8.4	9.4
2018	6.1	20.6	51.1	60.1	50.3	6.6	7.4
2019	6.2	20.1	51.0	60.5	50.8	5.8	7.1

Source: National Statistics Office, (2020c) – INE- Employment Statistics

A defining feature of the Portuguese labour market in terms of gender is that not only women are almost equally represented in the active labour force, but the percentage of working mothers is quite high (76% in 2011) contrasting with the European Union average of 57% (OECD, 2011).

The gender pay gap in Portugal is salient and more accentuated amongst upper-level professionals. Nevertheless, there has been a positive trend in this regard with the gender gap showing a slight reduction in the past decade.

Table 14. *Gender pay gap (women vs men)*

Year	Total	Senior managers and executive	Middle Managers	Unqualified Workers
2010	-18.0	-28.3	-14.4	-11.0
2015	-16.7	-26.4	-13.9	-10.5
2016	-15.8	-26.2	-13.2	-8.8
2017	-14.9	-26.4	-13.5	-7.6
2018	-14.5	-26.1	-13.4	-6.9
2019	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: National Statistics Office (2020d)

### 3.4 Patterns of education disadvantage

It is relevant to also mention the attendance of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Portugal. The enrolment rates are superior for the 3– to 5-year-old range than for the aged three and under. In Portugal, around 50% of the children under three years are enrolled in ECEC (Nata & Cadima, 2019). Despite the vast majority of these organizations are non-profit and public-subsidized, participation rates vary by family's income, with higher participation rates among the most economically advantageous families (59,5%) compared to the lower income families (36%) (Nata & Cadima, 2019).

In regard to another important indicator of education disadvantage - the early school leaving rate, there has been a substantial decrease in these figures in the past decade, with the 2019 rate being very close to the European target set at 10%. It is worth mentioning that the rate is quite unbalanced in terms of gender with men dropping out of mainstream education earlier.

Portuguese population has been increasing their education level, as shown in table 16. The figures for no education and less than nine years of education have been dropping, and the number of people with secondary and higher education is increasing.

Table 15. *Early school leaving rate (18-24 years) by gender*

Year	Total	Men	Women
2010	28.3	32.4	24.0
2015	13.7	16.4	11.0
2016	14.0	17.4	10.5
2017	12.6	15.3	9.7
2018	11.8	14.7	8.7
2019	10.6	13.7	7.4

Source; National Statistics Office (2020e)

Table 16. *Education level of the population aged 15 and above (%)*

Year	No formal education	Up to 9 years of education	Secondary education (12 <sup>th</sup> grade)	Higher education
2010	10.6	62.2	15.4	11.8
2015	8.3	54.7	19.9	17.1
2016	7.9	53.9	20.4	17.8

2017	7.3	53.5	21.1	18.1
2018	6.7	52.7	21.9	18.7
2019	6.3	51.5	22.7	19.6

Source: National Statistics Office (2020f)

### 3.5 Major social welfare trends such as disadvantage risks and welfare benefit receipt levels

Indicators above have already showed that children and youth are represented in poverty and social exclusion rates with figures higher than 20%.

Important also is that Portugal is one of the least successful countries in reducing the rate of child poverty due to social transfers (Nata & Cadima, 2019).

National social benefits and support to meet family needs are dependent upon the family's income and have changed considerably in the past years; for instance, in 2010 cash benefits for families changed, increasing selectivity and eligibility criteria, and reducing the amounts of benefits (Wall & Correia, 2014). These changes in family policies had dropped the impact on public spending on benefits and services for families, and thus the economic vulnerability and child poverty rates of families have increased (Wall et al., 2013).

### 3.6 Housing problems

Overcrowding rate has been decreasing in the past eight years, being lower than the EU-28 average (15.5% in 2018). The housing cost has increased severely from 2010 to 2015, due to the major financial crisis of 2011, and has shown a decreasing trend afterwards both in total and also when considering households with children. In both cases, the current rate is lower than the EU-28 average (10.4 for total; 9.6 for children in 2018).

Table 17. *Overcrowding and housing cost overburden*

Year	Overcrowding Rate	Housing cost overburden	Housing cost overburden - children
2010	14.6	4.2	6.1

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2015	10.3	9.1	11.8
2016	10.3	7.5	9.4
2017	9.3	6.7	7.2
2018	9.6	5.7	7.3
2019	N/A	N/A	N/A

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### 3.7 Summary

Economic growth in Portugal was above the EU average for most of the 1990s, but it has regressed drastically in recent years. Portugal was one of the European countries, along with Greece, most affected by the 2008 crisis, leading to the need for external help. Portugal is one of the EU countries with a greatest gap between social classes and its critical financial situation has weakened the welfare system, affecting the most vulnerable groups - people under 18 years of age and over 65 – about 1/5 are at risk of poverty (Costa, Baptista, Perista, & Carrilho, 2008; INE, 2016). Indeed, inequality levels, child poverty, and the inefficacy of social transfers to diminish these gaps, alongside a lack of systematic services/programs to tackle inequalities, put high pressure on families and children’s support.

The lack of support for families, low wages, gender imbalance, and a demanding labour market is also behind the low fertility levels found in Portugal.

On the positive side, and comparing with other European countries, Portugal does not face particular pressure from high migrant or ethnic minorities’ diversity. Also, the country is moving towards higher education levels of the population, especially the younger population.

## 21.4 The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions and actors which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision

### 4.1 Membership to the EU – YES, 1 January 1986

### 4.2 Relationship with European Union

In the Council of the EU, national ministers meet regularly to discuss the implementation of EU laws and coordinate policies. Council meetings are regularly attended by representatives from the Portuguese government, depending on the policy area being addressed.

The Council of the EU does not have a permanent, single-person president (such as the Commission or Parliament). Instead, its work is led by the country holding the Council presidency, which rotates every six months. During these six months, ministers from that country's government chair and help determine the agenda of Council meetings in each policy area, and facilitate dialogue with the other EU institutions.

Dates of Portuguese presidencies: Jan-Jun 1992 | Jan-Jun 2000 | Jul-Dec 2007

In January 2021, Portugal has again taken the presidency of the council.

#### *European Economic & Social Committee*

Portugal has 12 representatives on the European Economic and Social Committee. This advisory body – representing employers, workers, and other interest groups – is consulted on proposed laws, to get a better idea of the possible changes to work and social situations in member countries.

#### *European Committee of the Regions*

Portugal has 11 representatives on the European Committee of the Regions, the EU's assembly of regional and local representatives. This advisory body is consulted on proposed laws, to ensure these laws take into account the perspective from each region of the EU.

Portugal also communicates with the EU institutions through its permanent representation in Brussels. As Portugal's "embassy to the EU", its main task is to ensure that the country's interests and policies are pursued as effectively as possible in the EU.

#### *4.3 Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy*

Several policy actors could be identified. One of them is the National Board for Education which entails all activities related to the education system, and also comprises measures, actions and programs directed at supporting families and youth.

Another important actor is the National Committee for the Promotion of Rights and Protection of Children and Youth. This national committee coordinates 310 local commissions spread throughout the country that aim to promote children and youth rights, and prevent all conditions that may impair or put children's and youth safety, health, education or development at risk.

In the health sector, family health policies, programs and services are coordinated at the national level by the Directorate-General of Health, at the regional level by the Regional

Administration of Health and at local level by the Clustered Health Centres. Effective intersectoral action have demanded a strong institutional dialogue to develop and implement programs, such as the National School Health Program and the National Framework for Health Education, and increasingly, collaboration among Family Health Units and the Community Care Units, has provided the integration and continuity of prevention healthcare to at-risk groups of children and youth. Besides, under the Health Strategy 2020 there has been an emphasis on the role of healthy family environments, alongside the dissemination and implementation of best practices to empower and promote the resilience of families. Family and parenting programs promote health literacy and parent competencies, as well as reduce health inequalities that injure significant health indicators through the individual and family life cycles.

The National System for Early Childhood Intervention may also be identified as a relevant actor in terms of family policy and support since this system aggregates a set of services from different ministries, namely from the Health, Education and Work and Social Affairs Ministries. This organized system intervenes with children aged 0 to 6 to ensure all have the same development opportunities by strengthening their caregivers' competencies, promoting family and community resources, and identifying and intervening with all children who need early childhood intervention.

The Family Support and Parenting Counselling Centre (*Centro de Apoio Familiar e Aconselhamento Parental*) provide psychosocial support to families with differing needs and risk levels. These community entities, which integrate the institutional network of the National Institute for Social Affairs, offer a range of three basic services: family preservation, family reunification and family mediation.

#### *4.4 Influential lobbying groups*

Family policy lobbying is primarily done by NGOs. Influential NGOs that provide support services and advocate on behalf of vulnerable families and children include those related to the Catholic Church, such as União das Misericórdias Portuguesas, the National Confederation of Private Institutions of Social Solidarity (Confederação Nacional das IPSS) which aggregates non-profit institutions public-subsidized; many of them with a catholic board. Another important group is the Child Support Institute (Instituto de Apoio à Criança) founded in 1983 aiming at protecting and promoting children's rights and the *Associação para o Planeamento da Família* (Family Planning Association) founded in 1967 to assist all individuals in making free and conscious reproductive choices and to promote positive parenting.

#### *4.5 Influential policy/research networks*

Initiatives that can be found to have an important role in doing research and influencing policies are the of Family Policy Observatory (*Observatório para as Políticas da Família*), which develops autonomous or by request research projects focused on several strands of family support initiatives. Many of their projects translate into policy or research briefs, which are highly relevant for policy actors.

There are also important networks that advocate for children and women protection against violence, such as APAV – Victims Support Association and AMCV- Women and child against violence. Regarding LGBT+ rights, an important association is ILGA.

The Portuguese Society for Family Therapy (SPTF) is also worth mentioning.

#### *4.6 The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support*

It is generally recognized that the Portuguese welfare state has never reached the dimension and the importance it has reached on other countries of Europe, due to deep rooted historical and political reasons. Portugal shares with other southern European countries (Italy, Spain, and Greece) a welfare system characterized by a high level of subsidiarity to the family (Andreotti, Garica, Gomez, Hespanha, Kazepov, & Mingione, 2001). In Portugal there are low levels of state support as the state provides support only when family resources are exhausted. The levels of social protection are generally low and policies are fragmentary, despite the boosts that occurred since the adhesion to the European Union (Ayala-Nunes, 2019).

Furthermore, in recent years, the economic crisis led to a cutback in benefits for families and policy objectives moved away from an explicit pro-family and pro-egalitarian perspective toward a more implicit and residual policy perspective (Wall, 2016).

#### *4.7 The democratic system and main political parties*

Politics in Portugal takes place in a framework of a unitary semi-presidential representative democratic republic, whereby the Prime Minister of Portugal is the head of government. Portugal has a multi-party system. The President of Portugal is the executive head of state and has several significant political powers, which he exercises often.

Executive power is exercised by the President and the Council of Ministers. Legislative power is vested in both the government and the Assembly of the Republic. The Judiciary of Portugal is independent of the executive and the legislature.

Since 1975, the party system has been dominated by the social democratic Socialist Party and the liberal-conservative Social Democratic Party.

The country is divided into 18 districts, each headed by a governor appointed by the Minister of Internal Administration and two autonomous regions: the Azores and Madeira archipelagos

*4.8. The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular*

In Portugal there is no ministry or specific entity for family affairs or family policies. The National Institute for Social Affairs is the main responsible for most of family support initiatives, such as parental leave, cash support, and others.

Portugal is one of the countries where a fewer percentage of the GDP is spent in family policies (family expenditure in cash benefits): around 0,74%; the mean value across the EU is 1,48% (OECD, 2015).

There has been a delegation of state responsibility for disadvantaged families to third sector institutions (mostly private publicly subsidized NGOs) and to regional and municipal authorities. At present there is no specific governmental body with responsibility for overseeing family policies and their impact (Wall, 2016).

*4.9 The ways in and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policymaking and reviews*

In general, consultations with various external stakeholders during the policy making phase is regarded as a best practice and most national policies are issued for public consultation.

The involvement of these actors, however, seem to vary across different services and sectors. Parents, families, and children seem to be more involved with local services, for instance with those that are developed by the social sector or with health services; however, most policies are elaborated and defined at a central level (e.g., at a ministry or government level) where they may not be directly involved. Professionals are more involved than families, but it may also depend on their professional status; i.e. a practitioner working in a “daily” bases with families is not directly involved in the decision-making of policies. The structure seems quite hierarchical.

**21.5 List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year 2000**

From our own analyses and deriving from a set of interviews done with key-actors in family policy and family support we highlight the following policies:

- 1) National system for Early Childhood Intervention (Decree Law-281/09)

- 2) Inclusive Education (Decree Law- 54/2018)
- 3) ADELIA project
- 4) Program ESCOLHAS – (“Choices” program) (Renewed by Ministry council resolution nº 151/2018)
- 5) TEIP – Priority intervention schools (Decree Law - 20/2012)
- 6) Primary Health Care Services Reform
- 7) National Strategy for Infancy (expected to be published by the end of 2020)

*5.1 Indicate whether participation of families and young people has been mentioned in the document*

- 1) The participation is mentioned with a passive stance; i.e., they are expected to be involved but not explicitly mentioned how.
- 2) Parental involvement is explicitly stated throughout the document.
- 3) Project ADELIA – Apoio à Parentalidade Positiva - is focused on the promotion of positive parenting. One of its main axes explicitly stated the involvement of families and children.
- 4) Program ESCOLHAS aims to promote the social inclusion of children and youth from most vulnerable settings, and it is explicit in the regulation of the program that the target population (children and youth aged 6-25) should be involved in the actions.
- 5) TEIP is a government initiative implemented in schools located in economic and social disfavoured areas. In the formal deliberation the involvement of families and young people it is not explicit.

*5.2 Indicate the extent to which such participation has been implemented*

- 1) The aim is to empower families and give them tools to overcome the challenges of a child with developmental limitations. The practitioners that work with each family do this involvement. There are regular meetings between local intervention teams and parents; from this encounters, associations of parents have been established and are currently gaining some prominence in the community.
- 2) It is mandatory for any measure to take place that parents are involved and participate in the design of their child’s adapted educational curricula.

- 3) ADELIA is not being implemented nationwide; however, the involvement of families is implemented in the regions where the project is being developed. These involvements may take different forms, as a major aim of the project is the empowerment of families and parents alongside social innovation projects.
- 4) Unclear. It depends on the methodologies that each team implementing the program uses.
- 5) Unclear. It depends on the methodologies that each team implementing the program uses.
- 6) The primary health care service has suffered major changes in the last couple of years and one of its major changes is the existence of a “family health team” composed by a physician, nurse and administrative staff, which is assigned for each family. This allows for a proximal response to family needs. The participation of families, however, does not seem to include an active involvement.

## **21.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services:**

### *6.1 The priorities in child welfare and family policy*

The new focus of family policies underlines support for very poor families, the strengthening of selectivity mechanisms and a move away from state responsibility for families in general, by encouraging the non-governmental sector and families themselves to act as the “front-line” of support for persons “in need” (Wall et al. 2014). Family policy has therefore been included in social policy.

One main policy instrument, the “Programa de Emergência Social” (Social Emergency Programme) was introduced in 2011 with the main objective of reaching out to individuals and families in extreme poverty by providing support in kind. Measures include: a network of third-sector canteens, the introduction of free breakfast at school for children from disadvantaged families, and an uprating of unemployment benefits for low-income couples with children, in which both parents are unemployed and unemployed single parents who are not receiving alimony.

### *6.2 The main types of family provision and support and key features*

Since 2010 cash benefits for families have been changed along two main lines: increased selectivity, with eligibility criteria focusing on support for families with very low income, and cut-backs in the amounts of benefits (Wall, 2016).

#### *Cash support*

- Family Allowance (*Abono de Família*) – Main cash support to families. The amount depends on the families' income and is available until children and youth are up to 16 years of age. From 16-24 the support exists if youngsters are in education.
- Prenatal family allowance (*Abono de Família Pré-natal*) – Cash support to mothers to be after their 13<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy. Also dependent on women's annual income.
- Scholarship: cash support for students under 18 enrolled in secondary education and dependent on families' income.
- Minimum Income Benefit (*Rendimento Social de Inserção*)- It is not specific for families with children; however it is the cash benefit with the greatest impact on the reduction of extreme poverty. It comprises cash support, dependent on families' income and requires a signed agreement regarding social and professional responsibilities (e.g. the active search for a job).
- Food Fund “Fundo de Garantia de Alimentos” – cash support for single parent families to provide for food, when one of the parents does not fulfill his/her responsibilities of food supply.

#### *Other support*

- School Support (*Apoio Social Escolar*) – aimed at children and youngsters from low-income families, and includes cash and commodities such as food (in school canteens), transportation to/from school, accommodation and scholarships.
- School textbooks – free for all students enrolled in primary school.
- Dentist voucher – voucher for children under 16 years of age enrolled in public or semi-public schools.

#### *Work and family balance measures*

- Maternity and paternity leave – Maternity leave is paid at 100% for 120 days or 80% for 150 days. The rate can be 100% if the other parent (either the mother or the father) uses 30 days in exclusive. Father's leave is paid at 100% for 25 days.

- Enriching Curriculum Activities – *Atividades de Enriquecimento Curricular*: activities available for children enrolled in primary school allowing children to be in school facilities up to 17.30h. Around 86,3% of students are enrolled in this type of activities (OFAP; 2017).
- Childcare support for children under three was around 49,1% coverage (2017). Most of these services are not public and belong to the third sector; though the enrollment fees are calculated considering families income.
- Pre-school coverage is around 90,8% (2017); with just 53% enrolled in public facilities.

#### *6.3 The types of funding involved such as state, charity vs private sector providers and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners*

Local authorities, third sector institutions, charitable church organizations and schools have often introduced other forms of support (e.g., helping families to pay rent, paying for schoolbooks), thereby seeking to reach out to needy children and families and compensate for a decline in State responsibilities for families (Wall, 2016).

Many government initiatives, programs and policies are undertaken/operationalized through semi-private institutions who receive funds to implement family support programs and also use European incentives (e.g., childcare and eldercare facilities; ESCOLHAS program).

#### *6.4 Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations*

There are several limitations to policy monitoring and evaluation. Most indicators, when collected, relate to the quantification of the number of people using a specific measure, facility or program. For instance, the number of people that receive family allowance or the number of children and families target by the local intervention teams (of early childhood intervention) or the number of families enrolled in ADELIA program actions. The evaluation of more substantive gains in terms of parental competences, promotion of child development is not systematically assessed. Major limitations relate to the scarcity of human resources to implement additional actions and to the complexity of the interventions and the lack of coordinated action - many families are being assisted by and through many different programs; different practitioners and ultimately by different organizations.

Some initiatives, such as ADELIA, have planned a detailed assessment of its actions. This assessment will be assisted by a university-based research center.

#### *6.5 Limitations in national and official data and statistics*

Data is spread throughout several institutions, because there is no global family policy or an observatory for families and children. This makes it harder to compile and have access to rigorous, comparable data. Official data, derived from national census is also limited, for instance it is not possible to obtain disaggregated data on race and ethnicity.

Data regarding efficacy of different interventions is even harder to obtain, therefore our approach used the voices of key actors in different sectors to understand the challenges faced in collecting data.

### **21.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision. What are the prominent policy and practice developments related to family support services from children's rights, social equality, and evidence-informed perspectives?**

#### *7.1 What are the pressing policy, practice, and research challenges impeding developments?*

There are several positive initiatives regarding family and children support in the last decades in Portugal. A challenge that can be highlighted relates to the lack of a concerted global family policy. One can identify three main branches where family policies are undertaken: education, health, and social. Each branch has a different ministry and though some initiatives, such as the early childhood intervention diploma, assumes an inter-ministerial agreement, this is hard to implement.

Another challenge mentioned during the interviews was the vulnerability of many policies and programs to politics and political parties. As an example, even the oldest family policies, such as family allowances, change their eligibility criteria from government to government. Initiatives that are more recent also became highly dependent of the current political agenda.

Despite these challenges, there is a willingness to use and support new policies with the most recent scientific knowledge. Indeed, work-family balance and leave initiatives, early childhood intervention system or program ADELIA were the result of academic and evidence-based research. Nevertheless, this auscultation of the scientific knowledge does not occur in a systematic manner and the flows of information are not fully established.

Another important aspect relates to the assessment of policies and programs effectiveness. Again, we can highlight efforts in this regard but there is a shortage in terms of tools and procedures to identify a good assessment practice. Indeed, the initiatives are assessed from the point of view of the number of users/targets and from the subjective point of view of the practitioners that implement them.

#### *7.2 What are the pressing gaps in provision*

A transversal challenge highlighted in our interviews with key actors is the shortage of human resources to implement in full the existing policies.

Another gap is the translation of policies and programs to practice; i.e., their implementation across country and across different social realities. This could be promoted at the local level by municipalities, who could arrange and articulate resources from different sectors to ease the implementation.

An additional gap is the lack of a systematic evaluation and monitoring approach to the initiatives that are already taking place.

### *7.3 Policies and practices related to support of children and families in the Context of COVID-19*

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic the government has launched a set of measures to assist workers and their families, several of which are highlighted below:

- Tele-work mandatory during emergency state if the job is compatible with this work modality.
- Over several periods in 2020, due to restriction measures imposed by the government such as the closing of schools and childcare facilities, absences from work were justified, particularly when the employee had to be caring for a child under 12 years of age or any relative with a health condition/disability.
- During the period when schools were closed workers were entitled to a monthly income if they stay home caring for their dependent child (and were not in telework).
- When a child is in isolation due to COVID-19, the worker who cares for the dependent child is entitled to a subsidy.
- A worker in isolation due to COVID-19 receives the salary in its full amount for a maximum of 14 days.

Additional financial support measures:

- Changes in the calculations of the Minimum Income Benefit (*Rendimento Social de Inserção*).
- Extension of the duration of the Unemployment Subsidy and Minimum Income Benefit.
- Increase in the number of Food Program beneficiaries.
- Changes on the calculation of the Family Allowance (*Abono de Família*).

- Financial support for rent payments of families with severe loss of income due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Suspension of all measures related to the termination of rental contracts.

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## 22 ROMANIA - National report on family support policy & provision

**Alina Maria Breaz & Henrietta Torkos**

### 22.1 Trends and issues related to demography

#### (i) Fertility rates

The fertility rate in Romania is on the rise from 2010 to 2016. In 2018 it reached 1.76, which is higher than the rate in the EU, where the average fertility rate is 1.56 (Table 1). A Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 2.1 represents the Replacement-Level Fertility: the average number of children per woman needed for each generation to replace itself exactly, without needing international immigration. A value below 2.1 will cause the native population to decline.

Table 1. *Fertility rates per year*

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
1.59	1.47	1.52	1.46	1.56	1.62	1.69	1.71	1.76

#### (ii) Families with children by number of children \*

Table 2. *Mean age of women at first birth*

Year	Means
2010	25.5
2011	25.6
2012	25.7

2013	25.9
2014	26.2
2015	26.3
2016	26.4
2017	26.5
2018	26.7

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

Trends show that there is rise in the mean age of women at first birth age.

*(iii) Household composition*

Table 3

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
21.4	21.3	21.3	21.1	21.0	20.9	21.0	21.0	21.0	21.0

As shown in Table 3, trends regarding household composition are in permanent change, however in the last four years there has been stagnation in Romania.

*(iv) Percentage of population over working (retiring) age*

Table 4

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
16.1	16.1	16.1	16.3	16.5	17.0	17.4	17.8	18.2	18.5

Figures from 2010 to 2019 show an increase in the share of persons over working age, indicating a more ageing population. Nevertheless, the share is consistent every two years (Table 4). This varies when compared to the EU average where results kept increasing year by year. People are retiring at a later age, and there is an increasing number of people who remain in gainful employment for longer. (Eurostat, 2020)

*(v) Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities*

Table 5

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
23.7	23.7	23.7	23.9	24.3	25.2	25.9	26.7	27.5	28.1

In Romania social groups at all age groups are more at risk. These include children, the elderly, disabled persons, ex-convicts, lone parents, unemployed, and other low-income groups.

According to the 2011 census, the minority population is about 11% of the total population of 20.1 million. [3] The most important minorities in Romania are the Hungarian one - 1.23 million inhabitants (about 58.9% of the total minorities), followed by the Roma - 0.62 million (29.8% of the minorities), Ukrainians - 50.9 thousand inhabitants (2.44% of minorities), Germans - 36 thousand (1.73%), Turks - 27.7 thousand (1.33%), Russian-Lipovans - 23.49 thousand (1, 13%) and with less than 1% share (each) of minorities (20 thousand inhabitants or less) - Tatars, Serbs, Slovaks, Bulgarians, Croats, Greeks, Jews, Italians, Poles, Czechs and other minorities. Additionally, in Romania there are communities of Arabs, Afro-Romanians, Chinese, Vietnamese, Indians, Pakistanis, etc. (Worldometer, 2020).

*(vi) Migration patterns*

Number of immigrants - total, all geopolitical entities

Romania is in the middle of the transition made by immigrants to their destination country. The proportion of immigrants living in Romania increased four times in the period 2005-2017, from about 0.5 to 2% of the population (about 380,000 people).

- Approximately two thirds of immigrants have (re)acquired Romanian citizenship and approximately one third (120,399) are foreign nationals legally residing in Romania (they hold only the citizenship of a state other than Romania).
- Despite the growing trend of the number of immigrants in Romania in recent years, central, regional or local public institutions do not have data on immigrants from Romania that can be used to develop public policies.
- Foreign citizens legally residing in Romania can be classified into three categories: third-country nationals (RTT = 65,025); citizens of EU / EEA Member States (EU = 51,217); and beneficiaries of international protection (BPI = 4157).
- Compared to 2017, in 2018 the number of first registrations for RTT increased by 33.12% and the number of first registrations for BPI decreased by 45.10%.
- The largest annual increase in the number of foreign nationals in 2018 takes place in region 4, from 9.3% in 2017 to 17% in 2018.
- Approximately two out of three foreign nationals legally residing in Romania are men (66, 45%).
- The biggest differences between the proportion of women and men come from the category of immigrants in the European space.
- 86.78% of foreign citizens are aged between 15 and 64.

Table 6

2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
153,646	136,035	132,795	137,455	177,435	172,578

Number of immigrants - children (below 15), all geopolitical entities

About 25% of the total BPI are in the age group 0 - 14 years, about 93% of the total RTT in the age category 15 - 64, and about 12% of European citizens in the age category 65+.

Table 7

2015	2016	2017	2018
240	421	567	919

#### Number of immigrants - total, non-EU countries with low HDI

The most important countries of origin of third-country nationals are: the Republic of Moldova, Turkey, China, Syria, and Israel.

In 2018, the number of third-country nationals decreases slightly in the case of those from the Republic of Moldova, while the number of those from Middle Eastern and Asian countries increases.

In 2018, a diversification of migration to Romania can be observed by the fact that important groups of immigrants from more and more countries of origin are starting to arrive.

In 2018, the most important legal bases underlying the establishment in Romania are: family reunification (36.5%), for employment (26%) or for studies (19.5%). These proportions should not be confused with the types of activities in which immigrants are involved once settled in Romania.

Foreign citizens who come to Romania with a work permit are mainly concentrated in the developed areas and regions of Romania.

Table 8

2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
		240	421	567	919

Number of immigrants - children (below 15), non-EU countries with low HDI. A small number of immigrants have arrived in Romania in recent years, especially from countries such as the Republic of Moldova, Turkey, the People's Republic of China, Israel, Vietnam but also from areas such as Africa and other countries, in smaller numbers. After a peak in 2017 following

the wave of migration from the Middle East caused mainly by the Syrian Civil War, the volume of immigration in Romania collapsed in 2018. Since then, there has been only a slight increase in immigration from East Asia. However, Romania registers a net demographic loss as a result of migration, as many more inhabitants have left the country, on average about 300,000 people per year; Romania being the second largest source of migration in 2017 after Syria, a country then at war.

## **22.2 Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles and children's living arrangements**

### *(i) Family household types*

For Romanians, among the relationship between the family members, relationships resulting from marriage or procreation seem more important than the amount of time of living together or the location of the family members. For example: even if one parent lives abroad for work over a long period of time (years), they will still be considered a family member.

There are two types of families: family of origin, and family of procreation (created after marriage). There is also the nuclear family, which includes the husband, wife and their children, and extended family with other relatives: grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc., living together.

In 1960, 21.5% of families included grandparents as part of the household (Bachman, 1989), in 1992 and 2002 the number of extended families remained constant (NRIS, 1992, 2002). Multigenerational families are still more frequent than in the rest of European countries because of economic factors and traditions. (Eurostat, 2011)

The nuclear family shows a slow and steady increase in Romania, being represented by 68.2% of families in 1992, and 79.55% in 2002 (NRIS, 1992, 2002). The distribution of population between urban and rural areas has remained constant in the last decade (NRIS, 2008). In the last few years in Romanian towns, the nuclear family seems to be more frequent, but the role of the extended family remains important, especially in rural areas and for populations aged over 50. (Ghebrea, 2003)

### *(ii) Marriage and divorce rates*

According to the final results of the 2011 Population and Housing Census, over half of Romania's resident population aged 20 and over consisted of married people (61.1%) and one in five had never been married (21.5 %). Widows and widowers accounted for 12.0% of the population aged 20 and over, and divorced persons accounted for 5.4%.

716.4 thousand people, representing 4.5% of the population aged 20 and over, said they live in a consensual union. About three-quarters of them had never been legally married, and 17.3% were divorced at the time of the census (Leon, 2009).

In 2013, 107,507 marriages were registered in Romania, continuing a decreasing trend started in 2007. Following a slight decline in the years 2000-2002, the number of marriages in Romania experienced an upward trend until 2007, when marriages in Romania reached a maximum due to the implementation of a legislation that established financial support for the couples who are getting married for the first time (Law no. 396/2006).

The evolution of the marriage rate followed that of the absolute number of marriages, oscillating between a minimum of 5.2 marriages per 1000 inhabitants in 2011 and a maximum of 9.1 9 in 2007.

The analysis of the average age at the first marriage of the spouses reveals a constant tendency to increase it and to postpone the marriage. In 2007 (the first year after the implementation of financial support) there is a slight increase in this age, determined by postponed marriages for financial reasons. The marriage rate curve follows exactly that of the number of marriages, with a maximum (8.8 marriages per 1000 inhabitants) registered in 2007, after which the magnitude of the marriage phenomenon decreases massively, influenced by the external migratory phenomenon determined by Romania's entry into the EU. borders. (NRIS, 1993).

In 2013, 28,507 divorces were pronounced by final sentences or decisions of notaries public and civil status officers, the divorce rate being 1.4 divorces per 1000 inhabitants. Compared to the period 2000-2012, the number of divorces and the divorce rate decreased, after experiencing an oscillating evolution with an increasing trend in the period 2004-2011 (Robila, 2003).

Table 9

2010	5.7
2011	5.2
2012	5.4
2013	5.4

2014	5.9
2015	6.3
2016	6.8
2017	7.3
2018	7.4

*(iii) Lone-parent families*

In 2011, there were 15.5 million single-parent families with at least one child under the age of 25 living with the parent; this represents 11.0% of all families in the EU-28. Many of the capitals and other major urban agglomerations in the EU have been characterized by a relatively high share of single-parent families.

Less than one in 10 (8.8%) single-parent families with a child under the age of 25 living with a family in Estonia were single-parent families, with the lowest share in EU Member States. Single-parent families had a relatively small share (below 12%) in single-parent families in Cyprus, Ireland, and Poland.

In contrast, families composed of a single father and at least one child under 25 living with him accounted for one in four (25.3%) of single-parent families in Romania; the largest share in the EU. In Bulgaria, Spain, Finland and Sweden, the share of single-parent families was also relatively high.

*(iv) New family forms such as same-sex couple households*

In the Romanian population being more people of Christian religion, there are very rare same-sex couple households officially, in order to create statistics in this way.

*(v) Family structures and changes across social groups \**

In the last ten years, there were no significant or relevant social changes in the family structures or in the social groups.

*(vi) Children and youth living in institutions*

3% of children in the system were adopted in 2016 out of 5.7% adoptable, approximately 1.5% of the total are adoptable according to the laws

- 10,000 children enter the protection system annually
- 6,000 children annually who cannot be reintegrated into the biological family
- 32% end up in centers due to poverty, and 25% due to abuse and neglect
- less than 6% of children are adoptable
- 1 in 3 children spent 90% of their lives in the system
- on March 31, 2017: 57026 children in the system of which:
  - 19,236 institutionalized, with a degree of 1.51% adoptable
  - 18,775 to foster carers of which 14.43% adoptable
  - 14,199 the rude <gr IV, 0.15% adoptable
  - 4816 to other families, 5.21% adoptable
- in the top 3: Bucharest-Ilfov 3638, Iasi 3588 and Vaslui 2953
- 1 in 10 children is born to a minor mother

Table 10

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
23103	23240	22798	22189	22258	20,887	19832

*(vii) Children in out-of-home care such as foster care*

Social assistance was provided through social services and social assistance benefits. They were financed, according to the law, from funds allocated from the state budget, from local budgets, from donations, sponsorships or other contributions from individuals or legal entities, from the country and abroad, from contributions of the beneficiaries, such as and from other sources.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Justice is the central public authority that develops social assistance policy and promotes family rights, the child, the elderly, people with disabilities, and others in need. In 2017, the amount spent from the state budget allocated to MMJS for social assistance was 13465917.3 lei, by 15.1% higher than in 2016, and by 35.0% higher than in 2015. The increase was due in most part to the increase in the amounts of some benefits: the state allowance for children, child support allowance with children, placement allowance, some benefits paid to people with disabilities.

In total expenditures on benefits and social services performed through the budget issued by the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice, state child allowances the highest share (35.5% in 2015, 37.7% in 2016 and 32.7% in 2017), followed by child raising allowances (15.8% in 2015, 17.6% in 2016, and 25.3% in 2017).

Table 11

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
38858	37889	37832	37126	37620

*(viii) Home-based support*

The Ministry of Labour and Social Justice is the central public authority that develops social assistance policy and promotes family rights, the child, the elderly, people with disabilities, and anyone else people in need. In 2017, the amount spent from the state budget allocated to MMJS for social assistance was 2,733,863.35 euros, by 15.1% higher than in 2016 and by 35.0% higher than in 2015. The increase was due to the increase in the amounts of some benefits: the state allowance for children, child support allowance for children, placement allowance, some benefits paid to people with disabilities.

In total, expenditures on benefits and social services performed through the budget issued by the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice, child state allowances have the highest share (35.5% in 2015, 37.7% in 2016, and 32.7% in 2017), followed by child-raising allowances (15.8% in 2015, 17.6% in 2016, and 25.3% in 2017).

**22.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare**

*(i) Poverty rates*

Poverty is one of the major problems of contemporary Romania, in parallel with corruption. According to Eurostat data for 2013, Romania ranks first in the European Union in terms of relative poverty rate, with a percentage of 25.4%.

INS data show that there are 8.5 million people at risk of poverty or social exclusion. In addition, a third of the population is affected by severe material deprivation, in the sense that they cannot afford to purchase items considered desirable or even necessary to lead a decent life.

Moreover, Romania is by far the country with the highest inequality between rich and poor in the European Union, given that the most prosperous 20% of Romanians earn an income which is over seven times higher than the poorest 20% of the country's population, according to statistics published by Eurostat.

Table 12

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
24.6	23.6	22.1	21.6	22.3	22.9	23.0	25.1	25.4	25.3	23.6	23.5

*(ii) Employment/unemployment rates*

Finding a job is an important concern for young people leaving the system and manifests itself for some since the protection measure, depending on how responsible and prepared they feel for the independent life that awaits them, the opportunities that arise or they are offered, as well as the desire to experiment in a workspace. The first year after the termination of the protection measure is marked by professional searches and changes. Regarding job search, 37% of the total sample sought local employment and 15% abroad. Regarding the actual employment in the first 12 months after leaving the protection system, 8% of the young people who participated in the survey continued their activity at the service where they already worked, 34% found a job in the country, and 18% left to work abroad. 12% had occasional jobs or worked as day laborers. Continuing their studies was a path followed by significantly lower weights; 16% of respondents mentioned that they continued their studies after leaving the system, while 8% took a qualification course in another profession.

Young people have experienced various jobs, professional mobility being specific to current youth - almost 60% of young people have had at least three jobs since the termination of the measure protection and to date. At the opposite pole, 9% of young people did not have a job, and 9% never worked due to a disability.

Currently, half of the young people are employed under contract, 8% work occasionally or part-time, 6% work without legal forms, and a small share - 2% - have their own business or are self-employed. 10% of young people are unable to work, due to having certain disabilities. (NAPCR, 2009)

Table 13

2010	7.0
2011	7.2
2012	6.8
2013	7.1
2014	6.8
2015	6.8
2016	5.9
2017	4.9
2018	4.2
2019	3.9

*(iii) Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage related to gender, age, ethnicity, migrant status, and other social dimensions*

According to statistics on this matter, it has been noticed that the most disadvantaged group regarding patterns of economic and employment are people with disability and different

ethnicity, such as gypsies. The reason for this is that in the first case, particular and private firms are not ready regarding the pace of these specific workers, because they work in a slower rhythm, even if they request assistance from the government, they are scared that might get ill and as a result, slow down the whole company.

Regarding the second category, they prefer not to hire them, because they are scared that they are not going to work continuously and miss out. (NRIS, 2002) Design of tax systems and social security may affect the decision to participate in the labour market as well and the number of hours worked. These contra-stimulants of work can be especially great for the second person who contributes to family income. Right available data, increase the rate of effective marginal taxation relative to the second person contributing to family income has a negative impact significant impact on women's participation in workforce. It has also been shown that a balanced use of the rights to vacation between women and men after the birth of children has positive effects on sharing household responsibilities and care and participation of women in the labour market. The paternity leave by fathers, reduces part of the burden of care placed on mothers, thus allowing women to return earlier to the labour market. However, fathers generally take a paternity leave rarely, and leave to raise the child and when they do this, vacation periods are usually very short. The benefits and the degree of flexibility (namely the possibility of taking fragmented leave or work part-time) can increase the use of these holidays by fathers. Reservation of periods of leave for fathers (leave for paternity and non-transferable leave for raising a child) can also increase the degree of use of these holidays by fathers.

*(iv) Patterns of education disadvantage \**

In the Romanian educational system, there are groups of disadvantaged pupils and students such as those belonging to the social care systems due to lacking family support. The early school leaving rate in Romania decreased to 15.3% in 2019, from 19.1% in 2015, according to recently published Eurostat data. It is the largest decrease (-3.8%) of this indicator registered in the 27 states of the European Union, during the last five years.

The early school leaving rate is defined as the percentage of young people aged 18-24 who have completed the eighth grade and who have dropped out of school at that time, have not attended any other form of schooling or Professional training. In the last ten years, the early school leaving rate in Romania was stagnant from 19.3% in 2010, to 17.3% in 2013, followed by an increase to 19.1% in 2015. It then decreased steadily to 15.3% in 2019; still far from the target proposed and assumed in the 2020 Strategy, of 11.3%. The highest dropout rate in Romania in 2018 was recorded in the Central Region, i.e., in Transylvania, and was 5.2% in rural areas and 3.7% in urban areas, according to data from the National Institute of Statistics. On the opposite side, the lowest dropout rate was in the South-Muntenian region, of only 1.6%

in rural areas and 2.3% in urban areas. Edupedu.ro analysed the data for the last five years on each region, both in rural and urban areas, and they show the improvement of the school dropout situation across all regions and in all environments. More than 277,600 young people between the ages of 18 and 24 had dropped out of school between 2010 and 2017, leaving immediately after finishing high school. In Romania, early school leaving is at the third highest level in Europe after Spain and Malta, according to Eurostat, with an early school leaving rate of 15.3%.

*(v) Major social welfare trends such as disadvantage risks, welfare benefit receipt levels*

Major social welfare trends in Romania are the des-institutionalization and integration of beneficiaries in society. INS data show that in Romania there are 8.5 million people at risk of poverty or social exclusion. The analysis of the sex poverty rate in the period 2014-2017 does not reveal any significant differences between women and men. However, the risk of poverty is severely affecting different populations depending on the age group, the work capacity of which it also has, of course, the acquired income. Over the entire period analysed, the highest incidence of poverty was recorded among children and young people up to the age of 18; about a third of them below the poverty line, and well above adult levels. The period remained, decreased in this age group, registering a decrease of 5.0 percentage points compared to the previous year; 7.1 percentage points compared to the previous year from the beginning of the period. Poverty during this period has mainly affected young people aged 18-24, but the difference compared to the beginning of the period was -2.4 percentage points. The elderly population (65 years and over) is less affected by poverty (one out of five), the rate level being lower than the average for the whole population. In the period 2014-2017, the poverty rate among the elderly increased by 4.3 percentage points.

*(vi) Housing problems*

Almost half of the population in Romania (45.8%) lived in overcrowded housing in 2019, and 7.7% of the population lived in houses considered to be too large, according to Eurostat data. In the European Union (EU), 17.2% of the population lived in overcrowded housing in 2019, with insufficient rooms/inadequate space compared to the size of the family. Overcrowded housing results in children playing in the same room as parents trying to work from home during quarantine, the European Statistical Office explains. Moreover, overcrowded environments may present a higher risk of spreading the virus.

On the other hand, staying at home alone for days brings its own set of challenges. In the EU, more than one in three people (32.7%) lived in underoccupied housing in 2019, which means that they were considered too large for the needs of tenants.

Of the EU Member States, almost half of Romania's population (45.8%) lived in overcrowded housing in 2019. The same was true for about two out of five people in Latvia (42.2%), Bulgaria (41.1%), Croatia (38.5%) and Poland (37.6%). Compared to the previous year, the share of the population living in overcrowded housing decreased slightly in all these countries, the strongest decrease being recorded in Poland (-1.6 pp).

Awareness, perception, definition, and documentation of domestic violence differ substantially, depending on the country and era. In 2009 in Romania, the number of victims of domestic violence was 12,161 people. According to the World Health Organization, about 38% of women killed worldwide are killed by their partners.

Development of educational programs for parents and children, in order to prevent domestic violence, including through school-community-family partnerships. In order to develop non-violent skills and behaviours to achieve the goal of zero tolerance for domestic violence, the following relevant activities were carried out:

- Actions and meetings to disseminate social policies on zero tolerance for domestic violence.
- Strengthen the capacity of NGOs to integrate sexual violence into the public agenda – Organize training courses on domestic violence
- Carry out activities to educate children in the spirit of respecting family values and combating domestic violence
- Inclusion in the mandatory national curriculum of disciplines that address the issue of domestic violence prevention
- Implementation of programs for prevention and education of young people Target groups targeted by this measure:
  - Representatives of non-governmental organizations / foundations
  - Educational institutions
  - Units for preventing and combating domestic violence

*Summary: The broader socio-economic context and trends which influences children's, parental and family circumstances and environments*

Vulnerabilities of some single-parent families that have children and the lack of economical and material resources for poor families. The at-risk-of-poverty rate (after social transfers) in the EU-

27 increased between 2010 (the beginning of the time series) and 2011, from 16.5% to 16.9%. This rate was relatively stable over the next two years, before registering a more substantial increase in 2014, reaching 17.3%. In 2015 and 2016, smaller increases were observed (up to 0.1 percentage points each year). In 2017, the first significant decrease was noticed, the rate decreasing to 16.9% and being followed, in 2018, by another modest reduction of 0.1 points. As such, in the last two years for which data are available, the at-risk-of-poverty rate in the EU-27 has returned to a level similar to that found in 2011-2013.

In terms of this risk, the unemployed are a particularly vulnerable category; almost half (48.6%) of the total number of unemployed in the EU-27 were at risk of poverty in 2018, the highest rate was by far the highest in Germany (69.4%), with 11 other EU Member States (Lithuania, Malta, Latvia, Sweden, Bulgaria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Slovakia, Spain and Belgium) reporting that at least half of the unemployed were at risk of poverty in 2018.

## **22.4 The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions, and actors' which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision**

### *(i) Membership to the EU*

Yes

### *(ii) Relationship with European Union*

Renewal of the European and national policies regarding the beneficiaries that belong to the social care system.

### *(iii) Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy*

In the politic environment there are inserted different specialists from the social area who together with the political class build rules and policies and standards of quality for all the beneficiaries from the social care system. Some of the most well-known are as it follows: Ancaar filiala Fetesti; Centrul de zi Lucia; Asociatia Ateliere fară frontier; Asociatia de asistenta sociala Alma; Asociatia Southeast Metropolitan Development Association; Asociatia necuvinte, and Asociatia europeana pentru sustinerea drepturilor omului-combaterea discriminarii si coruptiei.

### *(iv) Influential lobbying groups*

Through the specialists, there are also the NGOs and associations which have a meaningful role in the support and the care towards the needs of the beneficiary. One of them is ASOCIATIA FEMEILOR AROMANE DIN ROMANIA, where the main activities involve preventing and

combating gender discrimination, gender mainstreaming in public policy, and equal opportunities for women and men to participate in public life.

*(v) Influential policy/research networks*

Mass media and all communication channels have the role of identifying the cases and getting to the knowledge of institutions that provide social benefits and services. The main authors are the Association of Catholic Families "Vladimir Ghika" and the PRO VITA Association - Bucharest branch, member organizations of the Coalition, together with a team of lawyers and sociologists. The approach is limited to the general objective of the Coalition for the Family: as numerous as possible, providing their members with a favourable economic, social, protective and psycho-affective environment for the formation and development of the personality, and for the nation's continuity and demographic, economic, social and cultural development. The development of the program began with a comparative study of contemporary families in Romania and the Czech Republic, conducted by the Association of Catholic Families "Vladimir Ghika" together with Narodni Centrum pro Rodinu (National Centre for Families) in Brno, Czech Republic to find out the level of policy awareness family in Romania. The next stage was the public consultation "Family - between aspirations and realities" initiated by PRO VITA and the Coalition for the Family. The approach was designed to identify both the problems facing the family today and possible solutions; the goal being a collection of valuable ideas. The initiators aimed to record the consultation on precise coordinates, starting from the establishment of the family and going through its daily existence, raising, and educating children and ending with the exchange of generations, to follow, therefore, the natural stages of "life" of the family. The consultation was answered by over 100 people and organizations who provided a total of about 150 different ideas for action.

*(vi) The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support*

It has a subsidiary role in the avoidance of social marginalization. The central regulation of Family Law consists of the Family Code. According to the Family Code, in Romania, the state protects marriage and the family; it supports, through economic and social measures, the development and consolidation of the family. The state defends the interests of the mother and the child and shows special care for the upbringing and education of the young generation. The Family Code also stated that the family is based on freely consented marriage between spouses. In accordance with the legal provisions, on October 1, 2011, the new Civil Code entered into force, and the Family Code was repealed, the relevant articles being included in the Civil Code.

*(vii) The democratic system and main political parties; (unitary vs federal state structures; centralised vs decentralised structures) \* (not more than 10 lines)*

All the political area is actively involved in the elimination of social marginalization. The objective of the Romanian Government is for all citizens to have equal opportunities to participate in society, to be appreciated and valued, to live a dignified life, and their basic needs to be met and differences respected.

In this context, the social inclusion of vulnerable groups and reducing the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by 580,000, until year 2020, compared to 2008; according to the assumed target of Romania in order to meet the objectives of the Strategy Europe 2020; is the main goal of strategy. This Strategy on Social Inclusion and Reduction of poverty contains an action plan that will allow Romania to make considerable progress in poverty reduction and promoting social inclusion for vulnerable individuals, families, and groups in the following seven years.

The strategy also presents a structured set of measures with the role of ensuring the achievement of the targets assumed by Romania in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy 1. The strategy aims to coordinate and update the set of strategic actions to reduce poverty so far. In addition, to ensure complementarity and coordination with other approaches in this broad field of social inclusion, the strategy incorporates elements from sectoral strategies and other specific areas such as combating child poverty, reducing discrimination against Roma, and integration of marginalized communities. This Strategy also responds to country-specific recommendations made by the European Commission, which is also developed accordingly with the National Reform Program and the convergence for the period 2012-2016. The elaboration of the strategy is based on a wide area of new data collected and analysed.

*(viii) The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular (e.g., Ministry roles, national vs local/regional government roles) \* (not more than 10 lines)*

The role of the government in Romania is mainly to monitor the implementation of the legal frame in the local areas:

- At central level - the National Authority for the Protection of the Rights of the Child and Adoption subordinated to the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice;
- At county level - General Directorates of Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC), subordinated to the County Councils, respectively to the Local Councils of Bucharest;

- At local level - Public Social Assistance Services, organized at the level of municipalities and cities, or persons with social assistance attributions from the own apparatus of the local communal councils.
- (ix) *The ways in and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policymaking and reviews \* (not more than 10 lines)*

Citizens in general are actively involved in both the completion and the implementation of the legal frames and social policies, together with professionals. The most important of these are as follows: Work inspection; National Agency for Payments and Social Inspection; National Authority for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; Children and Adoptions; National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men; Institutions under the authority of the ministry: National House of Public Pensions, National Agency for Employment; Institutions operating under the coordination of the ministry: National Institute for Scientific Research in the Field of Labour and Social Protection.

## **22.5 List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year 2000. For each policy document indicate**

- (i) *Whether participation of families and young people has been mentioned in the document*

Yes, through the implication of NGOs and associations. Some of the documents are presented as it follows: The youth area has a set of important normative acts, most of them adopted in the last 10 years:

Law no. 69/2000 on physical education and sports with amendments and subsequent completions:

- the Law on the regulation of volunteer activities in Romania (Law 78/2014);
- Law 90/2001 on the organization and functioning of the Government and ministries;
- Law on state support for young people in rural areas (Law 646/2002);
- Law on prevention and combating social marginalization (Law no. 116/2002);
- Law on the insurance system unemployment and employment stimulation (Law 76/2002);
- Law no. 146/2002 regarding the legal regime of the county foundations for youth and of the municipality of Bucharest and of the Foundation For Youth;
- the Law on Apprenticeships at Work (Law 279/2005, republished in 2012);

- the Youth Law (Law 350/2006), the Decision of the Romanian Government regarding National strategy for social inclusion of young people leaving the child protection system (GD 669/2006);
- Law 258/2007 on the practice of pupils and students;
- Law no. 333/2006 - on the establishment of information and counselling centers for youth;
- Law no. 351/2006 - on the establishment, organization and functioning of the Romanian National Youth Council;
- Law on stimulating the enrollment of pupils and students (Law 72/2007);
- Law no. 53/2003-Code 7 Labor Law, republished, with subsequent amendments and completions,
- the Law on the New Civil Code (Law 287/2009, republished in 2011), National Education Law (Law 1/2011).

*(ii) The extent to which such participation has been implemented \* (not line limit here)*

As active as they can be.

## **22.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services**

*(i) The priorities in child welfare and family policy \**

Protection and promotion of the right of children.

The elaboration of the National Strategy for the protection and promotion of children's rights 2014-2020 takes place at a time of reconfiguration of all public policies, from all sectors, in the context of preparing the new programming period of the European Structural and Investment Funds, while also respecting the priority of the objectives included in the Government Program 2013-2016 and of the targets set and assumed by the Europe 2020 Strategy. The strategy aims to ensure an effective framework for implementing the main priorities in the field of children's policies of the Government Program, designed so as to "allow conditions for the development and training of children from birth to adulthood." The elaboration of the Partnership Agreement in order to establish European funding priorities has triggered a generalized strategic planning process at the level of all important sectors of government, including child policies in the fields of social protection, education and health, along with justice

and home affairs. This strategy proposes intervention measures related to the main strategic documents aimed at child protection, in particular the Strategy on Promoting Social Inclusion and Combating Poverty, which is being developed.

*(ii) The main types of family provision and support and key features (e.g., different types of cash support (universal and targeted, work-family reconciliation measures and children's/family services, childcare etc) \* (no line limit here)*

Medical leave and maternity allowance are granted to the pregnant woman or the woman in the first six to eight weeks after birth (the woman in labour) and total 126 calendar days. Maternity leave may be granted to pregnant women or women on maternity leave who are not on maternity leave and whose employer cannot provide them with safe working conditions for their health or that of their child. The maternal risk allowance can be granted for a maximum period of 120 days before and after the maternity leave, following the recommendation of the family doctor. The maternity allowance is paid to the mother for a period of 126 calendar days, during which she is on leave. It consists of 63 days of leave before birth (prenatal leave) and 63 days after the birth of the child (postnatal leave). The first 42 days of leave after the birth of the child are mandatory. The remaining 84 days may not be taken unless deemed necessary by the mother or may be taken earlier, before birth or later, after birth. Maternity allowance represents 85% of the average monthly income earned by the mother in the last six months before maternity leave. This allowance is paid for the 126 days of maternity leave, even if the child is stillborn. Maternity allowance is not subject to income tax, but beneficiaries must pay a 10% contribution to the health insurance system.

The state allowance is granted to children up to 18 years of age who have legal residence in Romania. Young people over the age of 18 who are in high school or vocational education also receive an allowance until they finish their studies. The allowance is not granted to young people who repeat the school year, except for those who repeat for health reasons, proven with a medical certificate. The child is the holder of the right to the state allowance.

*(iii) The types of funding involved such as state, charity vs private sector providers and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners \**

Projects, European projects mainly and funds from different institutions that provide support and also from NGOs.

*(iv) Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations. \**

Limitations in applying the policies to some social groups. T&CO Social Development Centre in Iasi took place between April 2018 and August 2019 PRO-PACT project- PROMOTION OF NGOs AND THE SOCIAL PARTNERS THROUGH ADVOCACY,

CAPACITY AND TRAINING, project co-financed by European Social Fund (ESF) through the Program Operational Administrative Capacity (POCA) 2014 -2020. The general objective of the project is to represent the increase of the capacity of NGOs and social partners in the Regional Pacts and County Partnerships for Employment, and for social inclusion to be actively involved in the process of public policy formulation in the respective fields of employment and social inclusion, in cooperation with public authorities.

The evaluation can happen through:

- better formulation of problems and priorities of local communities to which the public administration answers them;
- a more careful consideration of alternative policies to address these issues and priorities.
- decision-making based on data and studies, by assessing financial costs and benefits, social, environmental and health of the various policies which meet the priorities of the communities;
- better monitoring and evaluation of progress in program implementation, public administration projects and actions, through performance measurement and presentation of results to the general public.

The public policy monitoring report in the field of employment and social inclusion ensures the methodological support necessary for the realization of public policy proposals, and explains the role and the need for monitoring and evaluation activities in order to increase performance and improve efficiency in the public sector, while providing methodological support for the development of these activities.

*(v) Limitations in national and official data and statistics \**

Issues in the identification of some cases that are not reported, and because specialists cannot know the exact number of problematic cases. Romanian statistics was fully limited to the area of concern, international steps, measures, and actions, as well as the national statistics of other countries, aiming at promotion and implementation of fundamental principles. The relevance of statistical information is achieved by establishing bodies, launching the operation of instruments and mechanisms, within which, in the foreground, is placed the establishment of the National Statistical Council, consisting of representatives of all categories of users of statistical data,

which stands out as a tool for interaction with users and which, in quality as an advisory body, it exercises its role of examining the Annual Program and the multiannual survey of statistics, as well as providing opinions on policies and priorities in various areas of statistics.

## **22.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision. What are the prominent policy and practice developments related to family support services from children's rights, social equality and evidence-informed perspectives?**

*(i) What is the pressing policy, practice and research challenges impeding developments?*

Applying and implementing legal frames. The biggest challenges of family policies in Romania are as follows:

- Financial issues. Usually, when discussing the implementation of social policies, it intervenes often a deadlock over possible financial reasons.
- The economy, the main source of well-being, has fallen and modestly recovered in the last 23 years. Romania ranks last in the hierarchy of EU countries. The industrial field suffered a worrying restriction. The recovery of the economy after the last crisis is still modest, and will be able to reach a significant level only in the medium term.
- Modest social intervention of the state, complementary and compensatory with the economy.

*(ii) What are the pressing gaps in provision?*

-The society is in permanent evolution, so the social problems are in evolution too, and the legal frames cannot always handle this fast development in order to create legal frames in the social care systems.

- New policies and provisions in the field of family support should be implemented, and presented as follows:

- Creation of a dedicated structure - the State Secretariat for Families (SSpF) – within the Ministry of Labour, which will collaborate with specialized state institutions, religious cults, family associations, other non-profit organizations, and the media, to support and protect families by:

- organizing and coordinating statistical, demographic, sociological, psychosocial studies on the family, in collaboration with the National Institute of Statistics, the Institute for Quality-of-Life Research, Romanian Academy, other institutions and social research centers, including university;

- elaboration, based on these studies, of public policies for the family;
  - drawing up a coherent medium- and long-term rate recovery plan covering the demographics of Romania;
  - organizing an Annual Conference of Families.
- Creation of a Family Studies Institute / Institute for Families (IPF) through collaboration between state institutions and non-governmental structures.
  - Involvement and collaboration with IPF and SSpF, through studies, surveys, expertise, sociological tools, of some scientific structures subordinated to the authorities (Romanian Academy, research institutes, universities, etc.).
  - Creation, within the Romanian Parliament, of a Permanent Commission for Problems regarding Family, whose purpose will be to analyse, review, and reformulate the legislative provisions regarding the family.

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## 23 SERBIA - National report on family support policy & provision

**Jelena Arsic**

### 23.1 Trends and issues related to demography

#### (i) Fertility rates

The fertility rate in Serbia was at 1.40 in 2010 with a slight increase in the following years; 1.46 in 2015, subsequently reaching 1.49 in 2018 (Table 1).

Table 1. *Fertility rates*

Year	Total fertility rate
2010	1.40
2015	1.46
2016	1.46
2017	1.49
2018	1.49

Depopulation tendencies of the population with negative growth rate and negative natural increase were recorded in the province of Vojvodina at the end of the 1980s, and the rest of Serbia at the beginning of the 1990s. The ongoing depopulation is the main feature of the projected movement of population in the Republic of Serbia over 2011-2041. Namely, according to each of the five projection variants, the population of Serbia would be lower in 2041 than in 2011, and Serbia would be a typical region with negative natural increase. Population would get older demographically so that in thirty years, the proportion of persons older than 65 would increase from 17% to 24%. At the end of the projection period, almost every fourth resident

would be older than 65 years, and the rate of demographic dependency of older people during the projection period would increase from 25% to 39%.

*(ii) Families with children by number of children*

No Eurostat data is available for Serbia.

According to the 2011 Census data, of the total of 2,125,772 families in the Republic of Serbia, almost half (48.9%) belongs to the type “Couple with children”, followed by families “Couple without children” (28.3%), and “Mother with children” (13.7%). However, the smallest share is that of families of the type “Father with children” (3.6%), “Consensual couple with children” (3.2%), and “Consensual couples without children” (2.3%). Observed by family composition, the most numerous in Serbia are one-family households of marital/consensual couples with children (every third households, i.e., 36.4%), but there is no more concrete official data.

*(iii) Percentage of the population from 0 to 18*

In 2010, the percentage of the population under 18 in Serbia was slightly higher when compared to other European countries, however the rates kept declining from 2015 with continuously lower but stable rate in the period of 2016-2019 (Table 2).

Table 2. *Percentage of the population from 0 to 18*

Year	%
2010	21
2015	19.6
2016	19.4
2017	19.4
2018	19.4
2019	19.4

*(iv) Percentage of population over working (retiring) age*

There is a permanent trend of increase in the proportion of people aged 65+ over the last decades in Serbia (Table 3).

Table 3. *Percentage of population over working (retiring) age*

Year	%
2010	17
2015	18.5
2016	19
2017	19.4
2018	19.9
2019	20.4

*(v) Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities*

Identify vulnerable groups as documented in the social policy literature

According to the 2002 census, the population of Serbia numbers 7,498,001 persons, 6,212,838 of whom are ethnic Serbs. The census was not conducted in Kosovo, which held its own census that numbered their total population at 1,739,825,[225] excluding Serb-inhabited North Kosovo, as Serbs from that area (about 50,000) boycotted the census.

Ethnic groups (2011)

- 83.3% Serbs
- 3.5% Hungarians
- 2.1% Roma
- 2% Bosniaks

- 9% others
- (excluding Kosovo)

#### Religion (2011)

- 84.6% Eastern Orthodox
- 5% Catholic
- 3.1% Muslim
- 1.1% Irreligious
- 1% Protestant
- 5% Other/unknown

The religious orientation of persons belonging to national minorities is heterogeneous. Most Bosniaks, Albanians, Roma, and Egyptians are Muslim; while Croats, Bunjaveks, and the majority of Hungarians are Roman Catholic. Protestant congregations of various sizes are also present in Serbia.

#### *(vi) Migration patterns*

Include immigration and emigration statistics

In 2020, Serbia continues to be a country of transit for migrants and refugees arriving mostly from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Syria, and India. In the first three months of this year, Serbian police registered 839 individuals with the intention to seek asylum in Serbia, making it a total of 647,512 persons since 2008 when the statistics started to be collected (in 2019 there were 12,937 persons who expressed their intention to seek asylum). At the moment there are five Asylum centres and 14 transit centres active in Serbia for accommodation of refugees and migrants. Numbers of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees in Serbia increased since the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, and by the information from Commissariat for Refugees and Migrants of Republic of Serbia the current number in the asylum and reception centres is around 10,000, while at the beginning of the year the number was around 5,000-6,000.

There is an intensive emigration of young, skilled, and highly educated population (brain drain) mainly to Germany, Austria, USA, Canada, Switzerland, etc., and immigration of low-skilled economic migrants on a small scale. National data on emigration have serious failures;

partially as a result of changes in the methodological approaches, and even more as a result of still non-harmonized national statistics with international sources.

## 23.2 Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles, and children’s living arrangements

### (i) Family household types

In the Republic of Serbia, the Census of Population 2011 enumerated 2,487.886 households, and when compared to 1948 their number has increased by about 1.7 times (growth index is 168.9). Over the period of 1948–2002, there was a continuous increase of households accompanied by a constant decrease of their average size: in 2002, an average household in the Republic of Serbia had less than three members for the first time. In the last inter-census period, a decrease in the total number of households has been recorded for the first time, as the results of the Census 2011 show.

Table 4. Average household size

Year	%
2015	2.9
2016	2.9
2017	2.9
2018	2.9

According to the 2011 Census, two-person households (every fourth household, i.e., 25.6%) are the most numerous, followed by one-person households with a share in the total number of households of 22.3%, then by three-person households (19.2%) and four-person households (18.3%). The largest changes in the structure of households by the number of members, between the 2002 and 2011 Censuses are noted with one person and four-person households. Namely, the share of one-person households in the total number of households has increased from 20% to 22.3%, while the share of four-person households has decreased from 21.3% to 18.2%.

Observed by family composition, the most numerous are one-family households of marital/consensual couples with children (every third households, i.e., 36.4%), followed by one-person households, participating with 22.3% in the total number of households, then households of marital/consensual couples without children (18.5%). Observed by region, one-family households of marital/consensual couples without children, as well as marital/consensual couples with children, are mostly recorded in the Region Vojvodina (28.6% and 28.4%). Incomplete families are the least numerous in the South and East regions of Serbia: the share of families only with mothers and children is 17.6%, while that of families such as “Father with children” is 21.9%. Multi-family households are most present in the Regions Sumadija and West Serbia: every third two-family household (34.1%), i.e. every third households with three and more families (37.0%) is in this region. One-person households are the most numerous in the Vojvodina region (29.6%), while every third multi-member, non-family household (e.g., a household composed of brother and sister) is in the Belgrade region (34.4%).

Of the total of 2,125,772 families in the Republic of Serbia, as recorded in the 2011 Census, almost half (48.9%) belongs to the type “Couple with children”, followed by families “Couple without children” (28.3%), and “Mother with children (13.7%). However, the smallest share is that of families of the type “Father with children” (3.6%), “Cohabiting couple with children” (3.2%) and “Cohabiting couples without children” (2.3%).

### *(ii) Marriage and divorce rates*

According to the National Statistics Office, statistics of marriages recorded in 2017 a slight increase of 0.4% in the number of concluded marriages, when compared to 2016, i.e. an increase from 35,921 in 2016 to 36,047 marriages registered in 2017. The average age at the moment of marriage for women is 31 years, and for men 34 years. In 2017, the number of marriages ending in divorce increased by 2.4% in relation to the previous year, amounting to 9,242 divorces. The average age at divorce for women was 40 years, and for men 44 years. The average duration of a divorced marriage in 2017 was 13.4 years. The number of divorces saw a slight decline from 2002 to 2017. In 2017, there were five divorces per 1.000 inhabitants, which is less than the number of marriages in the census year 2002, when there were six divorces per 1.000 inhabitants. The number of divorces per 1,000 inhabitants in 2017 was unchanged in relation to 2002, i.e. one divorce per 1,000 inhabitants.

Table 5. *Crude marriage rates*

Year	%
2010	N/A
2015	4.9
2016	5.2
2017	5.2
2018	5.1

Table 6. *Crude divorce rates*

Year	%
2010	0.9
2015	1.3
2016	1.3
2017	1.3
2018	1.9

Table 7. *Divorces per 100 marriages*

Year	%
2010	18.6
2015	25.4

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2016 25.2

2017 25.7

2018 N/A

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*(iii) Lone-parent families*

No official data is available for Serbia. There are very few services for lone parents in Serbia, and there are just a few NGOs across Serbia that are mostly providing help for lone mothers in financial need. There are also some self-help groups, but not held in continuity.

Observed by family composition, the most numerous in Serbia are one-family households of marital/cohabiting couples with children (every third households, i.e., 36.4%), followed by one-person households, participating with 22.3% in the total number of households, then households of marital/consensual couples without children (18.5%). Observed by region, one-family households of marital/consensual couples without children, as well as of marital/consensual couples, with children are mostly recorded in the Vojvodina region (28.6% and 28.4%). Incomplete families are the least numerous in the South and East regions of Serbia: the share of families only with mothers and children is 17.6%, while that of families such as “Father with children” is 21.9%.

*(iv) New family forms such as same-sex couple households*

No official data is available since same-sex partnerships and households thereof are not recognised by law.

*(v) Family structures and changes across social groups*

No official data available.

*(vi) Children and youth living in institutions*

In 2018, there was a total of 2,107 children in institutions, out of which:

- 1,455 - in homes for children with disabilities,
- 603 - in homes for children without parental care,
- 114 - in socio-pedagogical correctional homes for youth.

*(vii) Children in out-of-home care such as foster care*

In 2018, total of 5,416 of children without parental care in foster homes.

*(viii) Home-based support*

No official data available - these are mostly project-funded services provided by NGOs. Community-based services (CBS), focused on family strengthening, play an important role in supporting vulnerable children, promoting social inclusion and prevention of child/family separation. They are part of a wider continuum of services seeking to address the set of challenges that often underlie the risk of neglect or violence. There is an evident lack of funding for social services at the local level.

**23.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare**

*(i) Poverty rates*

Table 8. *Population at risk of poverty*

Year	%
2010	N/A
2015	26.7
2016	25.9
2017	25.7
2018	24.3

In 2018, in comparison to previous years, poverty and social inequality indicators show positive trends. At-risk-of-poverty rate was 24.3%, representing a slight reduction compared to 2015 (26.7%), while a significant decrease was observed regarding the at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate from 41.7% in 2015 to 34.3% in 2018 (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2019).

*(ii) Employment/unemployment rates*

Table 9. *Employment rate*

Year	%
2010	N/A
2015	52.1
2016	55.2
2017	57.3
2018	58.8

Unemployment rate: no Eurostat data available for Serbia.

According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, the total number of employed in 2019 amounted to 2,901,000, representing an employment rate of 49.0% in the Republic of Serbia. Regarding population aged 15 and over, this rate of employment presents an increase of 1.4% in relation to 2018, but compared to employment rate in 2016 (47.6%) and 2017 (49.0%) no significant progress has been made. Changes in relation to the previous years, regarding other significant labour force indicators, are more favourable, represented in the trends of unemployment, inactivity rate and number of inactive persons decrease that started in 2013. In 2019 the unemployment rate amounted to 10.4% in the age group 15 and over, with the youth unemployment rate of almost one third of young population (27.5%) (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2020).

*(iii) Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage related to gender, age, ethnicity, migrant status, and other social dimensions*

The risk of poverty varies depending on age groups and employment status. In 2018, the most exposed to the poverty risk (29.1%) is the young population from the age group 18-24, while every fifth person aged 65 years and over is affected by poverty (21.1%). Regarding gender, the lowest poverty rate was recorded among males older than 65 (16.9%), while this percentage was highest among males under 17 years of age (30.1%) (Statistical Office of the Republic of

Serbia, 2019). In the same year, unemployed male persons were at the greatest risk of poverty (54.1%), followed by unemployed women (43.7%), in contrast to only 6.8% of total employees at risk of poverty (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2019). On the other hand, based on the relative poverty profile, relative poverty is attributable to the composition of the households; closely related to households with dependent children and elderly single-person households. Significantly more vulnerable are individuals in rural areas and with lower education (Social inclusion and poverty reduction unit, 2019). Regarding ethnicity in the Republic of Serbia, in the previous period the social and health vulnerability of Roma in comparison with general population has been recorded. Given that ethnicity-based poverty data are not collected in the Republic of Serbia, indirectly derived data has shown multiple exclusion of the Roma population from education, labour market and housing (The strategy of social inclusion of Roma for the period from 2016 to 2025).

*(iv) Patterns of education disadvantage*

- *Pre-School Upbringing and Education*

The coverage of children of pre-school age (0.5 – 6 years) in pre-school institutions, for the school year 2009/2010, was 41.36% (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia). There is inadequate coverage of children, with high-quality PUE programmes, especially of those in rural areas and from marginalised social groups (especially from Roma minority and children with disabilities group); the network of institutions, their geographic distribution, the offer of programmes and services in the system are socially unjust; the enrollment policy is driven by inadequate social criteria, i.e. priority is given to children of working parents, not the children from socially vulnerable categories. The coverage is deeply unfair as the least coverage is provided to children from marginalised social groups for whom early developmental incentives are essential (thus, the Republic of Serbia has not achieved the first goal of the Education for All global programme).

- *Primary Education System*

Not all children are covered by primary education: around 5% of an age group does not go to school (percentage of enrolment in PS for 2009 was 95.2%, according to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, and 94.9% according to MICS 2010), without any difference in the gender, but with differences among vulnerable groups. In rural areas, the dropout rate at the time of entrance is higher than average and, what is of greatest concern, it is increasing year after year: the coverage of children from rural areas has decreased from 81.15% in 2005 to 77.4% in 2009, and in 2008 the number of primary school children who enrolled in PS was 1.8% lower than in 2005 (MDG, 2009). From all vulnerable groups, Roma children have the lowest

rate of enrolment in PS. It is estimated that the cohort size of Roma children is around 25,000 and that 70% of them enrol in PS (MDG, 2009). The dropout rate during primary school is high, although there is no accurate or precise data on it, but it is primarily high among children from vulnerable groups, primarily of the rural and Roma children, and there appears to be a difference between the girls and boys (a 1.2% lower rate of enrolment than the boys). In 2005, around 95% of children from urban and 92% of children from rural areas went to the fifth grade (MDG, 2006).

The rate of primary education completion in 2009 was 95.2%. The rate of primary education completion among the children from rural areas is significantly lower (74.14%, 2008), there is a tendency toward a smaller number of boys finishing the PS and an increase in the number of girls finishing the PS (MDG, 2009). The dropout rate among Roma children in primary school is drastic. According to the latest data on Roma children from segregated settlements, 78% of them enrol in primary school while only 34% complete it (MICS 2010). There are no reliable data on the rate of completion of PS for children with disabilities and special needs; there are only data on children who are in the system (Institute for Education Improvement), but not how many of them were left out of the system.

- *Secondary education*

In the recent years, the enrollment rate in secondary schools has been increasing (from 76.40% in 2005 to 81.58% in 2008), but only one quarter of students go to comprehensive schools and secondary art schools. In 2010, the coverage was 25.38% (23.35% of students in comprehensive schools, and 2.03% in secondary art schools). Children from vulnerable groups, despite their abilities, often do not have access to education in comprehensive and art schools, mostly due to the poor social status of families who are unable to pay the costs of education out of their place of living (cannot pay for transport or for the child living in another place), and this type of education does not lead directly to employment, is time-consuming and requires investments. We have no data on the percentage of Roma children who enrol in comprehensive schools. It is probably negligible, because some form of secondary education is started only by 8.3% of Roma children, and completed by 6.2% (Roma Education Fund, 2004).

*(v) Major social welfare trends such as disadvantage risks, welfare benefit receipt levels*

Child poverty and vulnerability rates are considerably higher than average and have grown over the last few years - in 2017, the at-risk-of-poverty rate for children up to 18 was 30.5%. Rate is just slightly lower for youth 18-24 – 29.7%. Expenditures on financial social assistance totalled RSD 14.5 billion (0.33% of the GDP) in 2017. In the same year, financial social assistance was

used by over 104,000 households (over 260,000 adults and children), or 3.7% of the total population. This is slightly over one half of 7.2% of the total population (500,000 people) who has not been able to meet basic needs in 2017. The World Bank data emphasised that coverage of the population at risk of poverty by financial social assistance was low – it was received by only 11% of the poorest quintile. This situation is mainly a result of the harsh requirements regarding this transfer: income ceiling is very low - for an individual it is lower by one third than the absolute consumption poverty threshold; in addition, the land ownership ceiling is proving to be a very demanding clause especially for the elderly households in undeveloped rural areas. Furthermore, combination of many other requirements inevitably leads to a small number of those who meet all of them simultaneously.

The child allowance is subject to a means test and conditional upon regular school attendance, and could be used by first four children. The augmented amount (30% higher) is designed for children with disabilities, children in single-parent and foster and guardian families. Coverage rate of children and youth up to the age of 19 with child allowance stood at approximately 21% in 2017 (342,000 children). According to the last SILC (2016) data, the child allowance coverage rate for children living in severely materially deprived households is 53%, and for all children at risk of poverty (0-17) it is about 45%.

Besides cash benefits targeting the poor, other social transfers have a diverse impact on poverty and inequality. Cash benefits for children and adults with disabilities (basic and augmented, for those with the most severe disabilities) are designed for adults and children who are unable to independently perform activities of daily living as a result of illness or disability, apart from of their material status. Inside the social protection system, roughly 16.000 people received the basic (attendance) allowance, and about 35.900 received the augmented allowance, which cover about 60% of individuals with challenges in independent living.

In reality, adequacy of cash benefits for population at the risk of social exclusion should be judged under the fact that support community-based service for different vulnerable groups are modestly and unevenly developed. Due to lack of funding, expertise, and poor law enforcement in the area of social protection, those services are absent, inaccessible and elusive for the majority of those in need.

*(vi) Housing problems*

Table 10. *Overcrowding rate – total population*

Year	%
2010	N/A
2015	53.4
2016	55.5
2017	56.2
2018	53.3

Table 11. *Housing cost overburden rate*

Year	%
2010	N/A
2015	33.7
2016	31
2017	33.6
2018	31.3

Table 12. *Housing cost overburden rate for population under 18*

Year	%
2010	N/A
2015	37.4

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2016 34.3

2017 37.4

2018 35.1

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*Summary: The broader socio-economic context and trends which influence children's, parental and family circumstances and environments: (up to 15 lines)*

38.7% of the population were at risk of poverty or social exclusion (SILC, 2016) on widespread poverty that particularly affects families with children (highest at-risk-of-poverty rate was in households of two adults and three or more dependent children 55.8%), high income inequality (9.7 in 2016). At the same time, according to World Bank (2017), coverage of at risk of poverty population by financial social assistance was low (11% of the poorest quintile). Child allowance coverage rate for children living in severely materially deprived households is 53%, and for all children at risk of poverty is about 45%. Child poverty is a long-term and serious problem for which no adequate solutions have been found so far. These data indicate relatively modest outcomes of policies and measures in reduction of poverty and income inequality in reporting period.

Numerous data point to occurrence of extreme vulnerability and social exclusion among Roma ethnic community, internally displaced persons, persons with severe disability, elderly without pensions, people without or with low level of formal education and rural population. The situation of persons with mental and intellectual disabilities is of special concern, particularly for those who are residing in residential institutions of social protection and psychiatric hospitals or institutions for the enforcement of criminal sanctions. Policies and legal solutions in this area are inexplicable and uncertain, despite the longstanding need for reforms in this area. The position of children with disability and their families is particularly worrying; they need further efforts to overcome the consequences of social exclusion and poverty.

#### **23.4 The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions, and actors' which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision**

*(i) Membership to the EU*

No

*(ii) Relationship with European Union*

Serbia is a member of the United Nations, the Council of Europe, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Central European Free Trade Agreement, and NATO's Partnership for Peace. Based on its major strides in terms of reintegration with the European and international structures, Serbia was granted the status of a candidate country for European Union (EU) accession (March 2012). Other milestones in the process of EU integration include the conclusion of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the EU and its member states and the Republic of Serbia (September 2013), and the opening of negotiations of 18 chapters (out of a total of 35 negotiation chapters), of which two chapters have already been provisionally closed.

*(iii) Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy*

Family policy and social policy are mainly defined by the central government with most competences assigned to the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs. Some competences are devolved to the provincial and local governments. The legislative framework is solely defined by the National Parliament, while relevant strategic documents are passed on all three levels of Government.

*(iv) Influential lobbying groups*

N/A

*(v) Influential policy/research networks (Name them if available)*

- Social Policy and Social Work Research Centre, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Political Sciences
- SECONS Development Initiative Group
- Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit, Government of the Republic of Serbia

*(vi) The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support*

In our opinion, the type of Serbian political system is of no relevance to family policy/family support.

*(vii) The democratic system and main political parties; (unitary vs federal state structures; centralised vs decentralised structures)*

The Republic of Serbia is a parliamentary republic, organised as a unitary state with asymmetric regionalisation (two autonomous provinces), and a single-level and mono-type local government.

*(viii) The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular (e.g., Ministry roles, national vs local/regional government roles)*

The National Parliament passes legislation which is implemented by all three levels of government. Most by-laws are passed by the central Government and the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs. Competences for service provision are distributed among central, provincial and local authorities. Centres for social work are established by the local governments but are under intensive oversight by the central level ministry. Other social welfare institutions are also present on a provincial and central level depending on the types of services they provide. For example, cash benefits are provided from the central budget, while most social welfare services are provided on a local level.

*(ix) The ways in and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policymaking and reviews*

There is a legislation in place obliging policymakers to conduct public consultations in the process of drafting legislation and policy documents. This should include both relevant civil society organisations, academia, and general public. However, these are often poorly implemented in practice and end up as solely formal step in the procedure without effective influence on the final outputs.

### **23.5 List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year 2000. For each policy document indicate**

*(i) Whether participation of families and young people has been mentioned in the document*

The Economic Reform Programmes (ERP) and the Reform Program of Employment and Social Policy in the EU Accession Process (ESRP) are among the most important documents for the SDG's 1, 2, 8 and 10 implementations, which has been biannually produced from 2014 up to 2020. The ERP (2017-2018 and 2018-2020) stresses the need to improve the investment and business environment and fiscal wage policy, does not identify particular measures and policies regarding inequality, and defines the reduction of relative poverty as one of the priorities. Priority reforms in the social sectors is about improving adequacy, quality and targeting of social protection through the "increase of adequacy of cash payments" and the efficiency of social benefits for people below the poverty line, and enhancing the availability and quality of social services through legislation measures, linking different sectors and information systems (ERP, 2018-2020).

Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma (SSIR, 2016-2025) is a comprehensive document holding different affirmative measures for men and women from the Roma community who are affected by the consequences of long-standing multiple discrimination and social exclusion. The Strategy deals with the elimination of social inequality and poverty of Roma in Serbia through political, economic, social, and financial systems. The It sets five special objectives and diverse goals in five key areas: education, housing, employment, health, and social protection. In that way, SSIR is in line with the European Union (EU) Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies.

Strategy for Education Development (SEDS) includes a number of more or less detailed measures focusing on the education of ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, and gifted students. Particular focus is on regional disparities characterized by process of population decline in rural, near-border, underdeveloped and industrially devastated areas, and the issue of social inequality in education and problems related to unemployment of youth. A series of measures are envisaged and taken in order to increase of education coverage and inclusiveness, especially at the preschool education level and among the vulnerable groups of students such as Roma, children and youth with disability, and migrants and refugees.

National Gender Equality Strategy (GES) 2016 – 2020 with the Action Plan 2016 – 2018 pay particular attention to different aspects of gender inequality. The source of income determines the unfavourable status of women: earnings, financial compensation for unemployed persons, property income and loans/savings are the main source of income for 58% - 63% men, while for woman the main sources of income are pensions, scholarships, and social income (55%-57%). There is also an issue of higher unemployment rates and lower income among women, and evident gender-property inequality, since property is largely owned by men. Strategy specifically focuses on improving the position of women who experience multiple and intersectional discrimination, based on their ethnicity, disability, place of living (rural/urban), age, employment status, education status, and/or experience of domestic violence. Specific strategic goal (goal 2) aims to improve the economic and labour market status of women, to promote gender equality in rural areas and to ensure equal access to development results. During 2015, Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) was introduced in public finance; therefore, all budget users are obliged to implement the principles of GRB by the end of 2020.

Two documents prepared for EU negotiation process - Screening Report for Serbia for the Chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment) and Action Plan for the EU Negotiations Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights) are principally important for SDG 10. Screening Report for Chapter 19 considers the issue of unequal position of different groups within the society and a need to address critical labour market situation (including undeclared work), measures for

poverty reduction and social inclusion of the Roma, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. Action Plan for Chapter 23 focuses on the advancing of the position of vulnerable groups and stress measures aspiring to stop violation of equality based on the sexual orientation or gender identity (3.10.1.2), measures for improving the position of Roma (3.8.2), and measures to improve protection and enforcement of rights of children and persons with disabilities (3.6.2).

A decade ago (2009) Serbia adopted the Law on the Prohibition on Discrimination as a broad equality law. Two additional laws were also adopted concerning the non-discrimination of specific groups: the Law on the Prevention of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities, and the Law on Gender Equality, which is currently under review. Relevant law is also the Law on Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities, which deal with improving the position of persons with disabilities in the labour market. The interaction between these legislative documents is not established well, undoubtedly creating an added challenge in the area of enforcement.

The Strategy of Prevention and Protection against Discrimination (SPPAD) 2013- 2018, and its associated Action Plan for the Implementation has expired at the end of 2018. That universal strategy referred to measures needed to advance the right to equality of all persons but focuses in particular on the improvement of nine particularly vulnerable groups (women; persons with disabilities; the elderly; children; members of the LGBTI community; national minorities; refugees, IDPs and other migrant groups; people whose health condition may be the ground for discrimination; and members of religious communities). The latest report on the implementation of the SPPAD Action Plan states that for 122 specific measures, 63 (51.7%) are fulfilled, 22 (18%) are unrealized, 15 (12%) are partly realized, and there is no data for 22 (18%) of specific measures.

*(ii) The extent to which such participation has been implemented \**

Very low.

### **23.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services**

*(i) The priorities in child welfare and family policy*

Priorities in child welfare and family policy since 2000 mainly relate to children deprived of parental care in residential institutions, children with disabilities, displaced of refugee children, and child victims of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence, and are defined in various strategy documents. The most important document that defined policies toward children was

adopted in 2004 - the National Plan of Action for Children. The priority policies towards children include:

- Poverty reduction in children
- Quality education for all children
- Better health for all children
- Improve the position of and respect for the rights of children with development difficulties
- Protect the rights of children deprived of parental care
- Protect children from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence
- Strengthen Serbia's capacity to solve children's problems

However, this document expired in 2015 and a new one has not yet been adopted. Therefore, the priorities in general continue to remain unclear.

*(ii) The main types of family provision and support and key features (e.g. different types of cash support (universal and targeted, work-family reconciliation measures and children's/family services, child care etc)*

Various types of family support services are organized at national and local level. At the national level, there are state-covered cash benefits (social allowance, disability allowance, child allowance), statutory services, foster care, and residential care. Under the responsibility of local governments there are one-off cash allowances, preschool allowance for children from economically vulnerable families and community-based services (day care, personal assistance, drop-in shelters etc.)

*(iii) The types of funding involved such as state, charity vs private sector providers and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners*

All types of funding exist, however state funding prevails.

*(iv) Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations*

Supervision and control is mainly performed by the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, while the Republic Institute for Social Protection provides professional support to social welfare institutions. The Department for Inspection Affairs in the Ministry supervises the institutional care of users, while the Ministry also monitors the legality of the

professional work of social welfare institutions. There is a lack of independent monitoring mechanisms.

*(v) Limitations in national and official data and statistics*

The Eurostat 2017 Peer Review of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) found Serbia compliant with the European Statistics Code of Practice and further stressed the need to strengthen coordination within the official statistical system. The Statistical Office has independently implemented two rounds of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) and will be completing the fieldwork for a new survey round in 2019. This will provide Serbia with data for measuring over 20 SDG indicators, as well as those of several national policies. This is complemented by other efforts of the government to generate disaggregated data, such as through the new register on children with disabilities that is based on a functional assessment, as well as a national education information system. However, more needs to be done to enable administrative data collection systems for data disaggregation, advance data collection through innovation, and leverage the potential of evidence-based policymaking. Gaps in data on adolescence and children on the move are evident and would require attention in the upcoming years.

**23.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision. What are the prominent policy and practice developments related to family support services from children's rights, social equality and evidence-informed perspectives?**

*(i) What are the pressing policy, practice and research challenges impeding developments?*

The situation concerning children and children's rights, as well as the situation of families with children have been influenced by the (forced) return to the traditional network of inter-family solidarity, more or less organized state efforts to deal with emergency situations, variable priorities in the policies and laws (the transition from the nationalist policy of isolation to a pro-European policy and integrations is particularly striking). Also remarkable is the conflicting rhetoric that calls on traditional patriarchal family values and demographic national renewal on one hand, and the rhetoric of children's rights on the other. In addition, there has been a successive emergence of problems in various segments of society, whereby there has been a particularly striking increase in all forms of violence, including violence against children and peer violence. In fact, child welfare issues had low priority throughout this period; except in part from 2005 to 2011, when foundations of the current child welfare and protection system were set up.

Unpretentious development of community-based social care services combined with their insufficient availability and suitability, and lack of coordination with health, education, and other services, is of particular concern. In addition, absence of preventive programs and family

support services in the field of social protection is visible and well-recognized, but not yet addressed in policies and laws. Such services are indispensable for the sustainable development of an inclusive society.

*(ii) What are the pressing gaps in provision?*

The legal framework largely follows international standards, but concerns have been raised about the lack of uniform application. Insufficient resources have been allocated for some ambitious solutions to become sustainable. Unfavourable economic indicators and widespread poverty (particularly in families with children), but also shortened electoral cycles that led to large variations in the political arena have all probably contributed to it. Currently, there is no strategic or any other policy paper which defines the development and aspirations of child welfare. In addition, the existing structures at both national and local level of authority, from the aspect of capacities, do not enable an efficient application of child welfare policy which would ensure a quality system.

Despite the evident expansion of community-based services for children and families, their sustainability, adaptability to the service users' needs, and connecting with other parts of the system remains an open issue. A long-time focus on de-institutionalization and development of foster care in Serbia has many positive, but also some controversial effects. Since measures to support parents and biological families have not been simultaneously developed, there has been a striking increase in the number of children in public care. There are also noticeable gaps in the system that are related to the long-term stay of children in care, underdeveloped mechanisms for return to the parental family, participation of children and parents in the assessment and planning, as well as in the design and evaluation of services. It is evident that Serbia needs to create policies that explicitly support family life and parenting.

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## 24 SLOVENIA - National report on family support policy & provision

**Tadeja Kodele, Marino Kačič, Klavdija Kustec, Nina Mešl, Mojca Šeme, Lea Šugman Bohinc, Petra Videmšek**

### 24.1 Trends and issues related to demography

#### *(i) Fertility rates*

The birth rate in 2017 was 1.62. According to Eurostat, this is above the European Union average, where the birth rate was 1.59. The birth rate in Slovenia increased slightly compared to 2016, where it fell at EU level (Table 1).

Table 1. *Fertility rates*

Year	Fertility rate
2010	1.57
2015	1.57
2016	1.58
2017	1.62
2018	1.60
2019	1.61

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

#### *(ii) Families with children by number of children*

In 2015, there was a slight increase in the percentage of families with two children in comparison with that in 2010. On the other hand, in 2015, the number of families with one and three children decreased slightly.

Table 2. *Households by number of children*

Year	No. of children		
	1	2	3
	%		
2010	4.3	25.8	7.1
2011	N/A	N/A	N/A
2012	N/A	N/A	N/A
2013	N/A	N/A	N/A
2014	N/A	N/A	N/A
2015	3.7	26.1	6.1

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

*(iii) Percentage of the population from 0 to 18*

The percentage of the population aged 0-18 did not change much from 2010 to 2018, and is even the same from 2017 to 2019 (Table 3). We can relate this with the fact that the fertility rate also did not change significantly between 2017 and 2019 (Table 1).

Table 3. *Population 18 years and under*

Year	%
2010	19.2
2015	19.4
2016	19.4
2017	19.5
2018	19.5

2019	19.5
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Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

*(iv) Percentage of population over working (retiring) age*

The percentage of population over working (retiring) age is increasing (Table 4). Due to the increase in life expectancy, pension reforms and an increase in the number of years for full retirement have begun. However, as pensions are lower, people prefer to work longer.

Table 4. *Population over working rate*

Year	%
2010	16.5
2015	17.9
2016	18.4
2017	18.9
2018	19.4
2019	19.8

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

*(v) Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities*

(Identify vulnerable groups as documented in the social policy literature)

Roma people, immigrants, young families, families facing multiple challenges, single-parent families, the elderly, precarious workers, families with children with special needs, and same-sex couples.

**24.2 Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles and children’s living arrangements**

*(i) Family household types*

The average household size is slightly decreasing.

Table 6. *Average household size*

Year	%
2005	2.8
2006	2.8
2007	2.8
2008	2.8
2009	2.8
2010	2.6
2011	2.6
2012	2.5
2013	2.5
2014	2.5
2015	2.5
2016	2.5
2017	2.5
2018	2.5
2019	N/A

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

*(ii) Marriage and divorce rates*

In 2012, there was a slight increase in the crude marriage rate in comparison with 2010, but in 2013 it decreased slightly once again. On the other hand, in 2018, the crude marriage rate increased a little once again, in comparison with that in 2013.

Table 7. *Crude marriage rate*

Year	%
2010	3.2
2011	3.2
2012	3.4
2013	3.0
2014	3.2
2015	3.1
2016	3.2
2017	3.1
2018	3.5

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

As pointed out in Table 8, the crude divorce rate did not change much; from 2010 to 2017, it is more or less the same.

Table 8. *Crude divorce rate*

Year	%
2010	1.2
2011	1.1
2012	1.2
2013	1.2
2014	1.2

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2015	1.2
2016	1.2
2017	1.2
2018	1.1

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Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

The number of divorces per 100 marriages are constantly decreasing from 2010 to 2017. Slovenia has for many years been considered to have a low marriage rate, and consequently a low divorce rate in EU (Rener et al., 2006).

Table 9. *Number of divorces per 100 marriages*

Year	Nb.
2010	47.3
2011	43.3
2012	42.1
2013	42.9
2014	39.3
2015	34.0
2016	31.1
2017	30.7

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Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

### *(iii) Lone-parent families*

In 2015 there was a slight increase in households composed of one adult in comparison with 2010. On the other hand, in 2015 there was a slight decrease in the percentage of households composed of three or more adults.

Table 10. *Lone-parent families*

Year	Household composed of		
	1 adult	2 adults	3+ adults
	%		
2010	27.6	24.0	11.2
2011	N/A	N/A	N/A
2012	N/A	N/A	N/A
2013	N/A	N/A	N/A
2014	N/A	N/A	N/A
2015	29.5	24.1	10.6

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

*(iv) New family forms such as same-sex couple households*

In the scope of the 2015 Register-based Census Statistical Office of Republic of Slovenia (hereinafter SORS) derived for the first time the data on same-sex families. There were 81 same-sex families (of whom 46 between men and 35 between women), of whom 64 were without children, and 17 were with children. The number of family types increased from six to eight (same-sex partnership without children and same-sex partnership with children). That is a new milestone in developing family statistics after the 1981 Census, when the data on consensual unions was collected for the first time. At that time, approximately 10,000 consensual unions were recorded (2% of all families) (SORS, 2018).

*(v) Family structures and changes across social groups*

Even though the married couple families with children are still the most common (217,119 in Slovenia on 1 January 2018), their number has been decreasing rapidly since 1981 when 331,000 such families were recorded and represented two thirds of all families. As pointed out

in Table 11, the number of all other types of families are increasing in 2018 in comparison with that in 2015. These trends suggest the pluralization of family forms.

Table 11. *Family structures*

Family Structure	Year		Change in %
	2015 Nb.	2018 Nb.	
Married couple without children	131.245	131.201	0.0
Married couple with children	224.290	217.119	-3.2
Mother with children	116.295	117.775	1.3
Father with children	26.844	28.418	5.9
Extramarital partners without children	15.575	18.692	20.0
Extramarital partners with children	61.847	64.198	3.8
Same-sex partnership without children	64	111	73.4
Same-sex partnership with children	17	30	76.5
Total	576.177	577.544	0.2

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

*(vi) Children and youth living in institutions*

The number of children and youth living in institutions are more or less the same. There is just some fluctuations in year 2006 (the number is decreasing in comparison with that in 2005). The same trend we can identified in year 2011 in comparison with that in 2010). On the other hand, we can see that the number of children and youth living in institutions is increasing since 2012.

Table 12. *Number of children in institutions for children with emotional and behavioural problems*

Year	No. of Children in Institution			
	Youth home	Re-education home	Educational institution	All institution together
2005	114	24	183	321

2006	106	7	175	288
2007	117	8	170	295
2008	115	9	178	302
2009	117	8	181	306
2010	120	7	187	314
2011	107	N/A	178*	285
2012	118	N/A	183*	301
2013	130	N/A	231*	361
2014	138	N/A	239*	377

Note. SORS (2020).

\* Data are aggregated for re-education homes and educational institutions.

The number of children and youth in daily care is increasing from 2006 to 2014, but on the other hand the number is decreasing in institutional care from 2006 to 2014. Since the data for children and youth in the daily care and institutional are not separated from 2015 onwards, we cannot confirm this trend afterwards; we can just see that the number of children and youth in the centres for training, work and care is slightly increasing from 2015 to 2017.

Table 13. *Number of children in the centres for training, work and care (0-18 ages)*

No. of Children in the Centres for Training, Work and Care*			
Year	Daily Care	Institutional Care	Together
2006	54	159	213

2007	67	135	202
			193
2008	72	121	193
			194
2009	74	119	164
			182
2010	92	102	190
			230
2011	76	88	150
			156
2012	83	99	160
2013	107	83	
2014	124	106	
2015	N/A	N/A	
2016	N/A	N/A	
2017	N/A	N/A	

Note. SORS (2020).

\* Centres for training, work and care are intended for children and youth (aged 0-18) with moderate and severe developmental disabilities. Daily care means that children and youth attend a day care program, institutional care means that children are permanently housed.

The number of children (aged 0-18) in institutions and homes is decreasing from 2005 to 2012, but on the other hand, the number is increasing in 2013 and 2014. In 2014, the number in institutions for physically handicapped children increased.

Table 14. *Number of children (aged 0-18) in institutions*

No. of Children in Institutions and Homes

Year	Institutions for physically handicapped children	Institutions for deaf and hard of hearing children	Institutions for with mild or moderate intellectual disabilities	Institution for blind and visually impaired children	All institutions together
2005	195	23	214	28	424
2006	142	24	215	24	405
2007	119	19	212	21	371
2008	132	23	195	14	364
2009	106	21	187	13	327
2010	106	21	185	14	326
2011	111	25	173	11	320
2012	118	36	157	8	319
2013	150	36	184	11	381
2014	208	49	181	19	457

Note. SORS (2020).

To add to the above data, we should mention that according to SORS data, in 2014, 1.272 children and adolescents were institutionalized for a long time in educational institutions and institutions for persons with disabilities. In the following years, this number increased (see, for example, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, public tender, 2017). We estimate that in 2019 there were at least 1,500 children in institutions of these types. In addition, psychiatric wards in Slovenia have a total capacity to treat 71 children and adolescents hospitalized from one day to six months (closed and open wards for intensive care for children and adolescents, psychiatry and pedopsychiatry). In the field of psychiatry, there are about 420 children in institutional treatment per year; around 350 children with health and personality problems are admitted to the Rakitna Youth Climate Health Resort (Drobnič Radobuljac, 2016;

Ferlič Žgajnar, 2019a, b). This means that more than 2,000 children a year have experience with institutionalization. At the same time, we did not consider short-term institutionalizations into crisis centres in Slovenia.

*(vii) Children in out-of-home care, such as foster care*

The number of children in foster care decreases per year.

Table 15. *Number of children in foster care (under 18)*

Year	No. of Children
2004	942
2005	932
2006	912
2007	888
2008	849
2009	835
2010	824
2011	780
2012	770
2013	788
2014	744
2015	747
2016	716
2017	684
2018	671
2019	657

Note. Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (2020).

*(viii) Home-based support*

In Slovenia, families and children are supported through a special service called "Social assistance to family for the home". This is the basic service to support families within the community and to prevent foster care or out of home care. The service includes professional counselling and help for the family in arranging relations between family members, professional counselling and assistance in caring for children, and training the family to perform its daily role. Beneficiaries of the service are individuals and families in cases where social hardships and problems arise from unsettled relationships in the family and can be solved only by changes in the family as a whole. This service is also provided when family seeks professional advice and assistance in caring for children but known patterns of behaviour and knowledge are not sufficient to solve problems and in cases where the social hardships of two or more family members require more sustained support and guidance to ensure normal conditions for the family's survival and development (ACSW, 2020). There are no statistical data available.

**24.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare**

*(i) Poverty rates*

There was the increase in 2013-2015 with the decrease after that, but not to the level of 2005. In 2014, the poverty threshold began to decrease, settling at 13.3% in 2018, which is below the EU average (16.8%), but still higher than it was during the period preceding the crisis, e.g., 12.3% in 2008 (EUROSTAT, 2020).

Table 16. *At risk of poverty rate (APR)*

Year	%
2005	12.2
2006	11.6
2007	11.5
2008	12.3
2009	11.3
2010	12.7
2011	13.6

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2012	13.5
2013	14.5
2014	14.5
2015	14.3
2016	13.9
2017	13.3
2018	13.3

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Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

*(ii) Employment/unemployment rates*

There was an increase in the unemployment rate from 2009-2013. From 2014, there is a decreasing trend.

Table 17. *Unemployment rate*

Year	%	
	of active population	of total population
	Unemployment rate (15-74)	Total employment rate (15-64)
2004	6.3	65.3
2005	6.5	66.0
2006	6.0	66.6
2007	4.9	67.8
2008	4.4	68.6
2009	5.9	67.5
2010	7.3	66.2

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2011	8.2	64.4
2012	8.9	64.1
2013	10.1	63.3
2014	9.7	63.9
2015	9.0	65.2
2016	8.0	65.8
2017	6.6	69.3
2018	5.1	71.1
2019	4.6	N/A

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

(iii) Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage related to gender, age, ethnicity, migrant status, and other social dimensions:

Table 18. People aged 20-64 at risk of poverty or social exclusion by citizenship and by sex (2018)

	Nationals			Foreign Citizens		
	Total	%		Total	%	
		Men	Women		Men	Women
EU-27	20.7	19.9	21.5	38.9	38.4	39.3
Slovenia	15.1	14.8	15.3	34.6	35.7	33.3

Note. Eurostat. 2018

Comments:

ADVANTAGES: the share of the working population (aged 20-64) who are in poverty or socially

excluded is lower in Slovenia (15.1%) than in the EU-27 average (20.7%), and according to the same indicator it is in Slovenia also a smaller gender gap than in the EU-27. The proportion of the poor and socially excluded is half a percentage point higher among women than among men, while at EU level this gap is slightly higher at 0.9 percentage points.

**DISADVANTAGES:** In Slovenia, poverty and social exclusion among immigrant men is 20.9 percentage points higher than among the entire male population in Slovenia, while this difference is smaller at the EU level, where it is 18.5 percentage points for men. It is the same with discrimination against women according to the same criteria: poor and socially excluded women among the immigrant population are 18 percent higher between foreign citizens in comparison with nationals. This difference is slightly smaller at the level of the EU average (17.8%). The proportion of women in part-time employment (in%: 2013 (60.4%), 2018 (65.5%) (OECD, 2020).

*Comments:*

**ADVANTAGES:** Slovenia has one of the lowest shares of part-time employment (part-time) in relation to total employment: the percentage of part-time employment in Slovenia is 7.9%, while the European average is 18.5%; the countries with the largest share of part-time employment were the Netherlands and Switzerland in 2019) (Eurostat, 2020). It is different with temporary employment; here Slovenia is closer to the European average. The percentage of temporary employees in relation to all employees in Slovenia is 10.9%, which is also the European average, while the average of countries with the Euro is 12.5%; the countries with the highest share of temporary employment are Montenegro, Serbia, Poland, Spain and Portugal in 2019 (Eurostat, 2020a).

The situation is similar with the share of women in part-time employment (see table above), which is lower than the OECD average (34 countries).

**DISADVANTAGES:** With these relatively favourable data, the share of women among the part-time workers is worrying: in the five years between the peak of the last economic crisis (2013) and the peak of the post-crisis boom (2018), the share of women among all part-time workers in Slovenia increased by as much as 8.4 percent (compared to 2013), which is the largest increase among all OECD countries, while in the same period OECD countries even managed to reverse the trend; on average they managed to reduce the share of women among part-time (Dragoš, in press).

Possible explanation: due to most indicators of gender equality, which are quite favourable in Slovenia and always remain (since the time of socialism) significantly above the EU and OECD average, the neoliberal trends in Slovenia ignore the policy of gender equality in

the labour market. As it is not, the labour market is exposed only to market regulation (depends only on supply and demand and economic cycles in the economy).

*(iv) Patterns of education disadvantage*

Large inequalities in children's educational progress are linked to family background. In 2018, at least 5% of students had an immigrant background, the largest difference in performance between immigrant and non-immigrant students were observed also in Slovenia (among other countries), with a gap of more than 60 score points in favour for non-immigrants students. In PISA 2012, 15-year-olds reported around-average positive views of their learning environments, but less positive teacher-student relationships than students in other OECD countries. The average teacher's salary is below the OECD average across school education levels. They range from 21838,27 EUR for pre-primary teachers and teaching assistants (compared to the OECD average of 31284,56 EUR) to 31764,61 EUR for upper secondary teachers (compared to the OECD average of 39481,87 EUR) (PISA, 2012).

*(v) Major social welfare trends such as disadvantage risks, welfare benefit receipt levels*

In Table 19 and 20, the most critical indicators of the quality of life in Slovenia are listed, namely those according to which the situation in Slovenia is deteriorating compared to the EU average, which is proof that we do not have appropriate social and health policies in these areas (or they do not work). These data are most often kept hidden because they are the most critical.

Table 19. *Deprivation in the most important areas of life - comparison of Slovenia (SVN) with the EU average (EU) (%)*

FIELD OF DEPRIVATION	EU 28 (Euro 19)	SVN	Difference (%) SVN/EU 28
Housing deprivation <sup>39</sup>	1.9 (14.1)	22.7	+ 63.3

<sup>39</sup> Housing deprivation is (in this table) defined as the percentage of the population living in a dwelling with at least one of the following characteristics: leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundations, rot in window frames or in the floor (data for 2018; Eurostat, 2020).

Social protection in the field of accommodation (% GDP) <sup>40</sup>	0.54 (0.42)	0.02	- 96.3
vsi (16+)	8.8	10.0	+ 13.6
16-24	1.5	2.1	+ 40.0
25-34	2.2	3.4	+ 54.5
35-44	3.9	3.2	- 17.9
Health deprivation <sup>41</sup>			
45-54	7.3	8.0	+ 9.6
55-64	11.6	13.6	+ 17.2
65-74	13.6	18.1	+ 33.1
75-84	23.2	32.2	+ 38.8
85+	34.7	35.2	+ 1.4
Deprivation of <i>public</i> health <sup>42</sup>			
No. <sup>43</sup> Of hospital beds	5.3	4.6	- 13.2
No. of doctors	3.41	2.54	- 25.5
private health expenditure <sup>44</sup>	26.61	28.27	+ 6.2

<sup>40</sup> Data are for 2017, except for the EU average of 2016 (Eurostat, 2020).

<sup>41</sup> Health deprivation indicates the percentage of the population that states that their health is poor or very poor (data valid for 2016; Eurostat, 2018, p. 81).

<sup>42</sup> Source: Žlogar, 2016.

<sup>43</sup> No. of hospital beds and no. of doctors per 1000 citizens.

<sup>44</sup> This is a percentage of expenditure on health care from private sources, compared to the total funds intended for health care (data for 2014).

Share of health care employees and in social work <sup>45</sup>	OECD: <sup>46</sup> 10.1	6.5
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Table 21

FIELD OF DEPRIVATION		EU 28 (Euro 19)	SVN	Difference (%) SVN/EU 28	
Social deprivation	Expenses of % GDP <sup>47</sup>	27.9 (28.9)	22.6	- 19.0	
	Expenses of % GDP	1.2 (1.4)	0.5	- 58.3	
	Poverty and social exclusion <sup>48</sup>	Single person	31.9 (30.5)	43.1	+ 35.1
		Single woman (without children)	32.2 (30.3)	45.3	+ 40.7
		Single 65+	28.3 (25.5)	43.4	+ 53.4

<sup>45</sup> "Health and social work is a subsystem of the service sector and is defined as a component of health activities, health services (including long-term care) and social work activities without accommodation"; the data represents the percentage of employees in relation to the total number of employees in 2017 (OECD, 2019).

<sup>46</sup> Average of 36 countries.

<sup>47</sup> Data for expenses for social protection and for unemployment are for 2017 (Eurostat, 2020).

<sup>48</sup> The risk of poverty or social exclusion refers to people who are at risk of poverty or who are severely materially disadvantaged or live in a household with very low work intensity. Persons are counted only once, even if they are present in several categories (data are for 2018; Eurostat, 2020).

Without social network (%) <sup>49</sup>	5	8	+ 60.0
At risk of poverty rate (65+) <sup>50</sup>	16.1 (14.9)	18.3	+ 13.7

*(vi) Housing problems*

The overcrowding rate is decreasing from 2005 to 2018. In 2018 it was even less than a third lower than in 2005.

Table 22. *Overcrowding rate*

Year	%
2005	42.0
2006	40.3
2007	39.9
2008	39.5
2009	38.0
2010	34.9
2011	17.1
2012	16.6
2013	15.6
2014	14.8
2015	13.7

<sup>49</sup> Source: Filipovič Hrast and Srakar, 2015, p. 2010.

<sup>50</sup> This is the at-risk-of-poverty rate for people over 64 (60% of the median) after social transfers, data for 2018 (Eurostat, 2020).

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2016	12.6
2017	12.8
2018	12.5

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Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

Housing cost overburden is increasing from 2009 to 2014, and decreasing after that.

Table 23. *Housing cost overburden*

Year	%
2005	4.7
2006	3.0
2007	5.0
2008	4.4
2009	3.9
2010	4.3
2011	4.7
2012	5.2
2013	6.0
2014	6.4
2015	6.1
2016	5.7
2017	5.2
2018	4.9

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Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

*Summary: The broader socio-economic context and trends which influences children's, parental, and family circumstances and environments\**

Beside the above-listed data, it is important to stress that there are more and more families and their members in Slovenia, that need help in a certain period of life. In recent years, many of them required assistance due to the socio-economic factors, which define the conditions of everyday life. The poverty rate is increasing. A growing number of families face social exclusion. The problem is high unemployment rate, as well as the fact that also families where adults are employed face poverty. The number of people who are below the poverty threshold despite being employed is also increasing (Leskošek et al., 2013). A major risk factor for the health of the population in Slovenia is also the poverty of children, adolescents, and older family members. The risk of poverty for children and adolescents in Slovenia is at its highest level from 2010 onwards. The interpretation of trend rate of child poverty risk must consider a variety of factors: parents' unemployment, the impact of social transfers, fertility changes (e.g., increase in the number of single-parent families) (Narat, 2013). Families face a variety of complex problems: poverty, social powerlessness, and lack of skills to deal with many problems. They can also experience social exclusion, the burden of disease, addiction, abuse, violence, oppression, homelessness, limited mobility in the environment, and an inactive lifestyle, etc.

#### **24.4 The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions and actors' which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision**

*(i) Membership to the EU\*:*

YES

*(ii) Relationship with European Union*

The Republic of Slovenia is an EU Member State included in the Economic and Monetary Union, having the Euro as the official currency, in the Schengen area, and it pursues the concepts of the European social model. By joining the EU in 2004, the state of Slovenia adopted the regulations of the European Social Policy. In parallel, it preserved its past established good practices, which are considered to be the most favourable of all EU Member States, such as maternity, paternity, and parental leave, and an extensive public childcare system (Lisjak, 2011; Resolution on the Family Policy [RFS], 2018). The goal of the current family policy in Slovenia is to provide for the quality of family life with an emphasis on the quality of child life, child protection and security, as evidenced by the wide spectrum of family benefits, including various child and parental allowances.

*(iii) Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy*

The most influential family policy actors are the state actors, as they have the monopoly of decision-making (executive and legislative authorities and occasionally judicial authority and officials). Interest groups are also involved in policymaking and policy implementing processes (for instance, employer and employee organisations, companies, organised interests in the area of agriculture, professional groups, voluntary organisations, churches, etc.). Policy is also influenced by mass media, established individual experts and researchers, institutes and universities. Ultimately, family policy is also influenced by individuals and movements demonstrating and petitioning, as well as a multitude of non-governmental organizations (hereinafter: NGO), of which only large ones have leverage, since for the most part smaller NGOs are not actively integrated in public policy (Švab et al., 2012).

*(iv) Influential lobbying groups (not more than 10 lines)*

Influential lobbying groups in the area of family policy come from interest groups, such as employer and employee organisations, employees' associations, NGOs, and voluntary organisations engaged in family issues, academic and research institutions, and disability organisations. One of the major groups is the movements within various churches. Lobbying groups mainly operate through individual senior ministry officials, influential politicians, or scientists, but mostly through political parties in the Lower House (National Assembly) and interest groups in the Upper House (National Council), and through mass media (Fink-Hafner and Leich, 2002; Lisjak, 2011).

*(v) Influential policy/research networks\* (Name them if available):*

There are the Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia (research work on behalf of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities – hereinafter: MLFSAEO), the Association of Centres of Social Work (hereinafter: ACSW), the Social Chamber (professional association holding some public powers), the Faculty of Social Work (hereinafter: FSW) and the Faculty of Social Sciences (hereinafter: FSS).

*(vi) The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support (not more than 10 lines)*

The Republic of Slovenia has a bicameral system comprising elected representatives of the people. The Lower House (National Assembly) is the highest representative and legislative body of the state. Operating within its framework is the Committee on Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Disability, which discusses draft laws, other acts, and issues relating to family policy. The

Upper House (National Council) is defined by the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia as the representative body for social, economic, professional, and local interests in Slovenia and has a consultative and initiating function. Operating within the Government of the Republic of Slovenia (executive authority) is the MLFSAEO, which devises and implements nearly all activities related to family policy. This policy is quite centralised within the country and to a high degree carried out through the Centres of Social Work (hereinafter CSW) (ACSW, 2020).

*(vii) The democratic system and main political parties; (unitary vs federal state structures; centralised vs decentralised structures) (not more than 10 lines)*

Managing of the state is organised on two levels: national and municipal. The Republic of Slovenia is a relatively centralised state without intermediate levels, such as state government or regional administrative units. A bicameral system of representation of the people is established at state level: The National Assembly (members of parties are elected according to the proportional system) and the National Council (councillors are elected from the interest groups they represent in this body). Half of the parties in the National Assembly are social and socialist parties, while half are Christian and people's parties. At the municipal level, municipal councillors are elected using the same method as for Members of Parliament. Therefore, governments at the state and municipal levels complement each other in terms of political parties' interests and the representation of people's interests.

*(viii) The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular (e.g., Ministry roles, national vs local/regional government roles) (not more than 10 lines)*

The MLFSAEO designs and coordinates most activities associated with family policy and largely implements them through the CSWs, which provide practically all family-related services at the regional level. Certain services are awarded by the Government through tenders to other institutions (e.g. the Social Chamber) and especially to NGOs (e.g. assistance to women victims of domestic violence). As the Republic of Slovenia does not have administrative units at the regional level, the next level of executive authority is the municipal administrations. These mainly perform the work provided for in family and social legislation. Municipalities also carry out their own family policy programmes – in areas not covered by state-prescribed forms of assistance (e.g. home help for families, one-off social assistance to families, etc.), and other programmes addressing specific municipal problems (assistance to Roma families, eg. additional tuition assistance, individual tuition assistance at school, home visits, assistance to a family with a large number of children etc).

(ix) *The ways in and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policymaking and reviews*

Given the wide field covered by family policy, the Republic of Slovenia has established a permanent expert advisory body for the Government in accordance with the Family Code (hereinafter FC) (2017) – the Council of the Republic of Slovenia for Children and the Family. The Council fulfils professional and consultative tasks for the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, assists it in drafting regulations and monitoring the situation in the field of children and the family, and reports to it on the rights situation in Slovenia. It consists of representatives of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, NGOs in the field of children and the family and professional institutions (Švab et al., 2012; MLFSAEO, 2019). This ensures cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary networking, and cooperation with experts from relevant educational and other institutions. The representatives of NGOs also serve as the voice of service users.

**24.5 List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year 2000. For each policy document indicate**

*a) Whether participation of families and young people has been mentioned in the document:*

Family and youth participation can be found across many documents in Slovenia, such as:

1. The Constitution of Slovenia (2003) states that children enjoy special protection.
2. Resolution of Family Policy 2018-2028 (2018, p. 2347). The resolution, as “Society friendly to all families” was adopted by parliament in February 2018. It is the first national strategic document on family in Slovenia in the last 25 years. Main principles are including all types of families, protecting children’s rights; promoting gender equality; respecting the autonomy of family and individuality of family members; universal access to family policy measures; tailor-made measures.

Three main goals are the improvement of the quality of living for families, especially children; the protection of families and individual family members, especially children; creating conditions that will encourage people to start a family / have more children.

3. National Youth Program (2013 - 2022) (2013) promotes the participation and representation of young women and men. The participation of young people in the institutions and processes that shape their lives is essential if we are to create an environment in which young people will take responsibility for both their own future and the future of society. Ensuring the participation of young people is key to the successful and constructive involvement of young people in society. However, the distance from the centres of power, economic weakness and constant subordination of young people can

cause apathy, irresponsible behaviour, and unconstructive response to the current situation. Through participation, young people also learn about democracy or the functioning of current political systems, and acquire the skills necessary for the functioning of democracy, such as negotiation, negotiation, lobbying, etc. Through their own participation in decision-making processes throughout their childhood and early adolescence, young people also gain an idea of how public (political) decision-making takes place, and thus understand it more easily. In any case, youth participation is more than just learning, and young people must have an actual say in decision-making. Supporting and motivating youth participation at a young age helps to ensure the involvement of young people in decision-making in later life and prevent their alienation (Response of youth representatives in the Government Council for Youth to the draft national youth program of 8 August 2011).

4. Another document we can find is a document on FC (2017). FC (2017) participation based on the principle of inclusion, equality, protection and respect. The FC mentions that the programs should be organized for the benefit of the children. Four Articles explains this in more details (Article 7, 143, 158 and 182).

Article 7 (FC, 2017) states bodies, public service providers, holders of public authority, local government bodies, and other natural and legal persons shall have regard to the best interests of the child in all activities and proceedings concerning the child).

Article 143 (FC, 2017) is about child's expert opinion and expert opinion of the CSW:

- (1) When deciding on custody, the upbringing and maintenance of a child, contact, exercise of parental care, and transfer of parental care to a relative, the court shall also take into account the opinion of the child expressed by himself or herself or by a person trusted by him or her, the meaning and consequences of which he or she can understand (FC, 2017).
- (2) When deciding on the custody, upbringing and maintenance of a child, contact, parental care and the award of parental care to a relative, the court shall take into account the opinion of the Center for Social Work, if it obtains it in accordance with the provisions of the law on non-judicial proceedings (FC, 2017).

Article 158 (FC, 2017) is about the opinion of the child:

- (1) In deciding on a measure to protect the best interests of the child, the court shall take into account the opinion of the child expressed by him or herself or by a person of his or

her trust whom he or she has chosen, if he or she is capable of understanding its meaning and consequences (FC, 2017).

- (2) The court may issue a restraining order without the child's opinion previously obtained (FC, 2017).

Article 182 is about the right of the child to counsel:

- (1) The advocate shall safeguard the interests of the child in proceedings and activities concerning them, if the safeguarding of their interests cannot be secured in other more appropriate ways (FC, 2017).
  - (2) Advocacy for a child shall be regulated by a special law (FC, 2017).
5. Programme for Children 2020-2025 (2020). The program's priority areas are interlinked and there are equal opportunities for all children in the following areas: 1. family environment and housing deprivation, health, including pre-school and school education, culture and cultural and artistic education, the most vulnerable groups of children; 2. participation of all children; 3. life without violence and safety of children in the digital environment; and 4. child-friendly practices.

SPIRS also organized "Child Observatory Centres" with the aim of improving the lives of children. The observation centres of the Child Observatory serve to monitor the participation of the children. It is based on the values of participation (consistent consideration of the participation of children in all procedures.

*b) The extent to which such participation has been implemented (not line limit here)*

So far, we cannot find any evaluation and research that focuses on children's participation. At the moment, we are not able to outline how participation is actually implemented through social programs, and how each social program ensures children's participation. As stated earlier, we need to prepare research focusing on participation with the aim of presenting how participation is realized in practice.

## **24.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services**

*(i) The priorities in child welfare and family policy*

Family policy in Slovenia is inclusive to all types of families, it also considers the plurality of family forms and various needs that arise. It respects the autonomy of the family and the

individuality of its individual members, it protects children's rights in the family, and more broadly (like in the educational system, health system etc.), and puts the protection and quality of life of families and children at the forefront (Resolution on family policy, 2018).

Children's position and circumstances are mainly related to the position or living conditions of parents and guardians. It is important that we understand the issue of the situation of children broadly (e.g. in the context of understanding influence across all levels: micro, mezzo and macro level of child's development.) and address it holistically within the framework of family policy, and at the same time include it as an integral part in other important areas (educational, health, legal etc.). To ensure a quality, healthy and safe childhood, and good opportunities for successful development in all areas, the state ensures a functioning and effective family protection system, while adopting appropriate educational, health and other programs and measures to ensure the well-being of children (Resolution on family policy, 2018).

In 2006, Slovenia adopted the Program for Children and Youth 2006–2016, which comprehensively and extensively addresses the issue of the situation of children and youth (Resolution on family policy, 2018). In 2013, it updated this program for the period 2013-2016. Most recent strategic document that addresses children, youth and family policy in Slovenia is *Resolution on the Family Policy 2018–2028: "A Society Friendly to All Families"* (Resolution on family policy, 2018).

In a comparative perspective, Slovenia achieves a relatively high level of quality of life for families and children, as it constantly ranks at the very top of various international scales, measurements, and indicators. The results of a survey on the quality of life of children conducted in 2017 by the international organization Save the Children show that children live the best quality in Slovenia (Resolution on family policy, 2018). According to selected indicators (eg. the risk of poverty and social exclusion, social exclusion, justice of children) it ranked first among 172 countries in the world. According to the indicator that illustrates the situation of children — the risk of poverty and social exclusion of children — in 2015 Slovenia was the fourth country with the lowest risk of poverty and social exclusion (Eurostat, 2015).

The latest data, for 2016, show a continued reduction in the risk of poverty and social exclusion (both general and especially for children). Many family policy measures in Slovenia are recognized internationally as examples of good practice. As such, the rights to maternity, parental and paternity benefits were recognized, which amounted to 100% of the salary base (Resolution on family policy, 2018).

*(ii) The main types of family provision and support and key features (e.g. different types of cash support (universal and targeted, work-family reconciliation measures and children's/ family services, child care etc.) (no line limit here)*

In January 2019 Slovenia abandons cuts to family benefits (austerity measures with no pre-evaluated social impact on children and families were established in midst 2012). Due to the Public Finance Balance Act in 2012 for the first time, the trend in family policy was reversed. The levels of most family cash benefits, subsidies, and paternity/parental leave salary compensation, as well as income ceilings for entitlement to family benefits, were temporarily lowered. The birth grant and the large-family allowance, to which all families were previously entitled (all large families for the latter), were restricted to beneficiaries with a per capita income below 64% of the average wage in Slovenia. Child allowances were reduced by 10% for beneficiaries with a per capita income over 42% of the average wage, and were no longer paid to those with a per capita income of 64% or more of the average wage. Family benefits were no longer adjusted to inflation. Parental and paternity leave salary compensations were temporarily decreased to 90% of the amount on which social security contributions were paid in the previous 12 months, if that basis was €763.06 or above. The ceiling was also lowered from 2.5 times to 2 times the average wage in Slovenia (Stropnik, 2019).

The Act on Emergency Measures in the Field of Labour Market and Parental Care (2013) set the same ceiling for maternity leave salary compensation, which used to be unlimited. A permanent cut was made to the early childhood education and care (hereinafter: ECEC) subsidy. Free ECEC for the second child in families with two children in ECEC at the same time (in force since 2008) was replaced by a subsidy amounting to 70% of the ECEC fee (Stropnik, 2019).

Two positive permanent changes in family policy were brought in by the Public Finance Balance Act (2012). The first one is a parental fee subsidy paid from municipality budgets to registered childminders caring for children on the childcare centres' waiting list (the municipalities publish central waiting lists for places in public childcare centres in their territories). The subsidy amounts to 20% of the cost of the ECEC programme in which the child would be included if there were enough vacancies. The second one is a slight increase in the parental allowance (received by those who are not entitled to the maternity and parental leave salary compensation), which was also linked to the net minimum wage level. The temporary measures should have been in force until the year that follows the year in which economic growth exceeded 2.5% of GDP, which was the case in 2014 (Stropnik, 2019).

The Act Amending the Exercise of Rights to Public Funds Act (2015) was adopted in November 2015. It annulled some of the cuts in child allowances, but at the same time

introduced an additional condition for annulling the remaining financial consolidation measures. These were to remain in force until the year following the year in which both the economic growth exceeded 2.5% of GDP and also the annual increase in the employment rate in the age group 20-64 years exceeded 1.3 percentage points. Both conditions were fulfilled in 2017. As GDP had been continuously growing since 2014 (by as much as 4.9% in 2017), a birth grant was already received for each child born in 2018 (Act Amending the Parental Protection and Family Benefits Act, 2018). The remaining temporary measures, including the ban on adjustments for inflation, were abandoned on 1 January 2019 (Stropnik, 2019).

CASH SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES from 1st of January 2019 (Your social security in Slovenia, 2020)

#### *Child benefit*

One of the parents or the guardian of the child is entitled to the child benefit. The child must be under 18 years of age and have (permanent or temporary) residence in Slovenia. Income for the family member may not exceed EUR 1,019.86 (January 2019; Your social security in Slovenia, 2020).

Child benefit is not valid for a child who (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*):

- is in employment or carries out farming or sole trader activities or is a company partner;
- receives full care as a result of treatment, education, school or training in an institution where full-time free care lasts for more than 30 days;
- is in foster care;
- has the right to child benefit on the basis of an international agreement;
- does not live with both parents and only one of the parents is entitled to parental rights, if maintenance is not agreed by the CSW or defined by a court ruling except in cases where paternity is not registered.

Parents are entitled to the child benefit from the day of birth of the child until the first day of the following month in which they no longer fulfil conditions. A parent has the right to child benefit from 30 days following the birth of the child, which is claimable from the month of the child's birth. In the case of later entitlement to rights the latter will be recognised in the first day of the following month following submission of the application. The right to child benefit is valid for a maximum of one year. After one year, the CSW issues a new Decision (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*).

The amount of child benefit is defined regarding the average net monthly income for the individual member of the household, for which all income and payments are counted (except for payments covering specific needs). For this, household property and the number of children will be counted. Conditions which are (not) accepted in defining the amount of child benefit are listed on the MLFSAEO web site (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*).

Exceptional amount of child benefit will be defined as (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*):

- 30% increase in the case of a single parent family;
- 20% increase in the case where a pre-school child is not included in early childhood education.

The right to child benefit is examined through the CSW where the child has permanent residence or spends the majority of his/her time (*Your Social Security Rights in Slovenia, 2019*).

*Other family allowances (Your social security in Slovenia, 2020):*

- parental allowance
- childbirth allowance
- large family allowance
- childcare allowance
- partial payment for loss of earnings

Family allowances are intended for parents or guardians as lump sum or monthly allowances for childbirth and childcare (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*).

Family allowances include (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*):

- parental allowance: a monthly allowance for parents who are not entitled to the childbirth allowance;
- childbirth allowance: a lump sum for the purchase of clothing and other necessities, received by one of the parents;
- large family allowance: an annual payment for families with three or more children;
- childcare allowance: a monthly payment for a child requiring special care;

- partial payment for loss of earnings: a monthly payment for parents or guardians/foster parents caring for a child with a serious mental developmental disorder or serious physical impairment.
- Assistance in the purchase of vignettes: large families with 4 or more children that own or use a vehicle classified in the toll class B (large cars) are entitled to a yearly allowance for the purchase of the motorway vignette (a tolling sticker that enables usage of Slovenian motorways and expressways during a limited time period to all drivers of vehicles). It costs 120 EUR per year. of EUR 110 (equal to the difference between the price of a vignette for toll class A (EUR 110) and toll class B (EUR 220)).

Parental allowance is a right which lasts for 365 days following the birth of a child or longer in case of birth of twins, triplets or premature birth. Both the mother and child must be permanent residents of Slovenia, and currently residing in Slovenia (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*).

For the first 77 days following birth, the mother generally has the right to payment (or the father as an exception in the case of the mother's absence). Following 77 days of the child's birth one of the parents can receive payment on the basis of transitory agreement. This right may be attributed to the child's current guardian instead of the parents (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*).

Those not entitled to parental allowance are persons receiving benefits, partial payment for loss of earnings or payment of social security contributions in the case of four or more children, for which the partner receives child care allowance, right of payment for social security contributions as a result of the right to shortened working hours due to parenthood, payment of social security contributions in the case of four or more children or partial payment for loss of earnings for the same child (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*).

Persons entitled to parental allowance are included in pension and disability insurance. Applications for cash benefit must be submitted a minimum of 30 days prior to or 30 days after birth of the child, upon which the right to benefits will be recognised (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*).

*Childbirth allowance* is a one-off payment intended for the purchase of required items for the new-born. This right is valid for one of the parents with permanent residence in Slovenia currently residing in Slovenia, for whom the average monthly income for the family member may not exceed 64% of the average monthly salary in Slovenia or EUR 648.47 (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*). Applications for cash benefit must be submitted a minimum of 60 days prior to the anticipated birth date or at the latest 60 days after the birth of the child (for an adoptive

parent 30 days following placement of the child in the family at the latest) (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*).

*Large family allowance* is an annual payment intended for families with three or more children under 18 years of age (or 26 years of age if their parents must maintain and protect the child). The allowance may be received by one of the parents having joint permanent residence as well as the children currently residing in Slovenia or other person (e.g. foster carer), where three or more children from the family live without parents. Applications for the current year are to be filed in the current year (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*).

*Childcare allowance* is a right which may be accessed by one of the parents or other party for a child requiring special care if the child has permanent residence in Slovenia and currently resides in Slovenia. Parents for whom the child is fostered or in an institution with full time free care are not eligible. The right to the allowance is valid for the period in which the child requires special care up to 18 years of age, and after 18 years of age if the parents must maintain and protect the child. The opinion of a medical commission is required for the assessment of rights. Rights enter into effect with the birth of the child and are recognised from the first day of the following month on submission of the application (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*).

*Partial payment for loss of earnings* is the right for one of the parents or other persons who are stopping employment (leaving current job or data from Employment Service of Slovenia unemployment record) or beginning reduced working hours as a result of caring for a child with a serious mental developmental disorder or serious physical impairment, or a child with a specific illness from the list of serious illnesses. The right to partial payment can also be granted to one of the parents caring for two or more children with a moderate or serious mental developmental disorder or serious physical impairment. In this instance, the mother or father of the child also receive the right if they have two or more children who do not have serious developmental disorders (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*). Conditions for assessment of the recipient are that the child and parent are permanent residents and currently live in Slovenia. The right lasts until the child reaches 18 years of age or maximum two months following the death of the child. Parents for whom the child is in an institution with full time free care or in foster care are not eligible (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*). Applications for cash benefit must be submitted 30 days prior to or at the latest 30 days after stopping employment and last until the child reaches 18 years of age (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*).

*Parental allowance* (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*).

- Per child EUR 252.04. Parental allowance is adjusted twice annually in accordance with the retail price index

*Childbirth allowance (Your social security in Slovenia, 2020).*

- Per child EUR 280

*Large family allowance (Your social security in Slovenia, 2020).*

- Family with three children EUR 395
- Family with more than three children EUR 480

*Childcare allowance (Your social security in Slovenia, 2020).*

- Childcare allowance 100 EUR
- Childcare allowance for a child with a serious mental developmental disorder or serious physical impairment or a child with a specific illness from the list of serious illnesses 200 EUR

*Partial payment for loss of earnings (Your social security in Slovenia, 2020).*

- Full childcare EUR 734.15 gross
- Reduced working hours pro rata partial payment for loss of earnings
- Assistance in the purchase of vignettes: EUR 110.

*The right to cash benefit can be assessed at the Centre for Social Work (Your social security in Slovenia, 2020).*

*Parental protection (Your social security in Slovenia, 2020).*

This chapter covers parental protection: *maternity leave, paternity leave and parental leave* and parental right to reduced working hours resulting from parenthood; the *right to the payment of social security contributions as a result of parenthood in the instance of four or more children* and the *right to benefits during nursing*.

All persons included in the insurance list for parental protection are entitled to parental protection and social security contributions for parental protection. They must be covered from the day prior to starting parental leave or for at least 12 months in the past 3 years (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*).

The following are covered by the extent of rights for parental care cover (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*):

- the right to leave;

- the right to benefit;
- the right to part-time work and the right to payment of social security contributions owing to parenthood;
- the right to the payment of contributions in the instance of four or more children;
- the right to benefits during nursing and the right to payment of social security contributions during nursing.

Leave is the right to be absent from work as a result of birth and childcare, and is divided into the following (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*):

- Maternity leave as a rule begins 28 days prior to the anticipated date of birth and amounts to 105 calendar days. The mother must compulsorily make use of 15 days of maternity leave. As an exception the father or guardian is entitled to leave in the case of absence (death of mother or abandonment) or incapacity of the mother.
- Paternity leave is the right of the father and is not transferrable. The father is entitled to leave amounting to 30 calendar days.
- Parental leave is intended for further care of the child and begins on expiry of maternity leave. Each of the parents is entitled to childcare leave (130 days each, of which the mother may transfer 100 days to the father so that the father may use 230 days; the father may transfer all 130 days so that the mother may use 260 days) or the adoptive parent or guardian/foster parent. Leave for an adoptive parent takes effect at the latest 15 days following the placement of the child in the adopted family with the intention of adoption or on announcement of adoption.

Benefit is compensation or a special payment within the scheme of insurance for parental protection. The types of compensation connected to individual types of leave are:

- maternity allowance during maternity leave;
- paternity allowance during paternity leave for 30 days;
- parental allowance during parental leave (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*).

The right to part-time work resulting from parenthood (not less than half of full working hours) may be granted to one of the parents caring for (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*):

- a child under three years of age;

- moderate or serious physical impairment or moderate or serious mental handicap up to 18 years of age;
- at least two children up until completion of the first year of primary education of the youngest child (one year of the right is non-transferrable for each of the parents).

Part-time work must include at least half of the weekly working obligations. Rights are to be recognised from the day when the parent begins part-time work if the right has been assessed at least 30 days following the commencement of part-time work. If this is not the case, the right will be recognised from the date of submission of the application (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*).

The payment of social security contributions in the instance of four or more children belongs to one of the parents leaving employment to care for four or more children. The conditions for receiving this right are that (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*):

- both the child and parent have permanent residence in Slovenia;
- the parent was covered by parental protection or has been actively seeking employment for at least 12 months in the last 3 years.

Entitlement is recognised upon submission of the application, 30 days at the latest following cessation of work and lasts until the completion of the first year of primary education of the youngest child (*Your social security in Slovenia, 2020*).

*Leave calendar days (Your social security in Slovenia, 2020):*

- Maternity leave 105 days (at least 15 days must be taken)
- Paternity leave 30 days (15 days prior to the child reaching 6 months of age and 15 days after the parental leave and before the child completes the first year of primary education)
- Parental leave 260

*Benefit (Your social security in Slovenia, 2020):*

The base for individual types of benefit is a base from which contributions to social security are calculated for parental care in 12 consecutive months from which the last month is counted as a base from contributions in the month prior to the month of first application for leave. The benefit may not be lower than 55% of the value of minimum wage for Act Regulating Adjustments of Transfers to Individuals and Households in the Republic of Slovenia indexation and may not be

higher than double the value of the average monthly wage for Act Regulating Adjustments of Transfers to Individuals and Households in the Republic of Slovenia indexation in Slovenia.

- Maternity compensation 100% of average base
- Paternity compensation 100% of average base
- Parental compensation 100% of average base
- Right to payment of social security contributions in the instance of four or more children.
- The parent has the right to payment of contributions for social security for the minimum wage.
- The right to benefit during nursing, on the basis of confirmation of a specialist paediatrician the mother is entitled to a one-hour nursing break up until the child reaches 18 months of age.
- Up to nine months, 1/8 of the value of minimum wage according to Act Regulating Adjustments of Transfers to Individuals and Households in the Republic of Slovenia, 9-18 months' pro rata minimum wage value excluding benefit according to Act Regulating Adjustments of Transfers to Individuals and Households in the Republic of Slovenia.

Rights for insurance for parental care are assessed by the CSW, which is locally responsible in regard to the mother's permanent or temporary residence. If the mother is not resident in Slovenia, the authorised CSW in the last instance will consider: the headquarters of the mother's place of work or activity, the place of the child's birth and the permanent residence of the child's adopted family (Your social security in Slovenia, 2020).

### *Childcare provision in Slovenia*

The pre-school education and care has had a long tradition in Slovenia. Kindergartens have witnessed a steady development since after the Second World War and several important changes in the 70s and the 80s (programme development, higher qualification of education staff, better quality of playrooms and didactical aids, as well as an increase in enrolment) (Pre-school education in the Republic of Slovenia, 2017).

In the mid-90s, another conceptual and curricular reform of kindergartens or pre-school education took place. Two key laws apply to the pre-school education: Organization and Financing of Education Act 1996 and the Kindergarten Act 1996. They specify the terms and

conditions for establishment, organisation, and operation of kindergartens (Pre-school education in the Republic of Slovenia, 2017).

All public kindergartens and some kindergartens that hold a concession meet the principles, pursue objectives, and apply the guidelines of the Kindergarten Curriculum.

Moreover, Slovenian kindergartens have to abide by the rules on norms and staff requirements for pursuing the activity of pre-school education as to the number of children and adults in a playgroup, as well as by relatively precise rules regarding norms and minimal technical conditions for rooms and equipment to provide for health and safety of children (Pre-school education in the Republic of Slovenia, 2017).

The system of pre-school education is set up unified for all children aged 1-6 or compulsory school age, and it is state-subsidised. All children of 11 months and over have the right to a place in a kindergarten. The inclusion of a child is not compulsory; it is the decision of parent (Pre-school education in the Republic of Slovenia, 2017).

With regard to the percentage of subsidy for kindergarten that state pays instead of parents (MLFSAEO, 2021): The amount of kindergarten payment is determined according to the average monthly income per person, as a percentage of the price of the kindergarten program and on the basis of classification in the income class. The payment total is determined by a decision as a percentage paid by the parents from the price of the program in which the child is included. Parents with the lowest incomes are exempt, and parents with the highest incomes pay 77% of the program price. The price of the kindergarten program is determined by the municipality. It is calculated on the basis of the amount of labour costs of employees in the kindergarten, the cost of materials and services required to implement the program and the cost of food for children. For the time of the child's absence from kindergarten, the price of the program is reduced by the cost of unused food. More detailed rules on the child's absence from kindergarten (for example, reasons considered to be excused absence, deduction of the amount for unused food, the first day of the child's absence) are determined by the municipality, the founder of the kindergarten. For parents who do not claim a reduced kindergarten fee (and are liable for personal income tax in the Republic of Slovenia), the kindergarten issues an invoice in the amount of the highest income class according to the scale (77%). Parents who are not liable for personal income tax in the Republic of Slovenia pay the full price of the program in which the child is included. Foster children are completely exempt from paying for kindergarten; the price of the program in which the child is included is covered by the municipality in which the foster child has a permanent residence. The first application for exemption from kindergarten fees for a foster child is submitted by the foster parent. Parents who have two or more children

in a kindergarten pay 30% of the payment for the second child, which is determined by law as a reduced kindergarten payment. Kindergarten payments are exempt for each subsequent child.

The CSW may, in exceptional cases where the payment of the kindergarten program would jeopardize the social security of persons or for other important reasons, set a lower payment for the kindergarten. The reasons for the unfavourable social and material situation of a person who cannot be influenced by a person, but who is ready to start eliminating them with the professional help of the social work centre, must be specifically defined, within the agreed deadline and in the agreed manner.

The pre-school education is part of the system of education and in the domain of the Ministry responsible for education since 1993. It provides for the continuity between pre-school and compulsory basic school education. Moreover, the state provides for the national policy, legal framework, and basic programme of pre-school education. It is the municipalities that set up kindergartens. They are responsible for the implementation of programmes for pre-school children. The pre-school education is pursued at kindergartens, but there is also a regulated system of at home registered child minders (which are not the same as private kindergartens, as they only provide the care and not the education; they are more like private babysitting small businesses for children under the age of three). The share of children under the care of at home registered child minders is small (Pre-school education in the Republic of Slovenia, 2017).

Kindergartens provide full care (meals, as well) and aim to provide children with quality and age-appropriate learning and social skills. Pre-school education complements family care, children gain experience and knowledge that they cannot acquire within the family environment. In Slovenia, there is a high employment rate for both parents. Thus, parents choose to include their children in kindergartens primarily to provide care for them while they are at work (Pre-school education in the Republic of Slovenia, 2017).

Parents pay for kindergarten. The fees are means-tested (in 2015/2016, 4.3 percentage children attended kindergarten for free, and the highest monthly fee was €530, meals included) (Pre-school education in the Republic of Slovenia, 2017).

Participation in public and private kindergartens has been on the rise in recent years. The share has increased from 63.6% in 2005/2006 to 74% in 2010/2011, and 81.7% in 2018/2019. Most children attend public kindergartens (94% in 2018/2019) (SORS, 2020).

#### *Work-family reconciliation measures in Slovenia*

Promotion of gender equality and work–family balance in collective agreements one-year project to improve gender equality in Slovenia has shown that although the social partners

recognise equality measures as important elements of collective agreements, few have been incorporated (Lužar, 2016).

The GEQUAL project analysed whether collective agreements in Slovenia address current work–life balance issues, such as (Lužar, 2016):

- active fatherhood;
- population ageing; and
- the promotion of balanced gender representation in leading positions.

It also explored the extent to which the social partners in Slovenia include these topics in collective bargaining. Part of the project incorporated a survey of unions and employer organisations regarding the benefits and obstacles when introducing measures to reconcile work and family measures in collective agreements (Lužar, 2016).

#### *Promotion of work–family balance in collective agreements*

The coverage of collective agreements in Slovenia is very high (at least 80%), and they therefore represent a key source of employees' rights, including work–family balance (which can contribute to reducing gender inequalities) (Lužar, 2016).

In order to evaluate how measures for a better reconciliation of work and family have been implemented in collective agreements, the IDPF developed its Index I. This is an index of the normative inclusion of aspects for easier reconciliation of work and family into collective agreements. Index I consists of a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 equals no work–life balance indicators included in a collective agreement. An agreement's position on the scale is based on 13 indicators (drawn from a sample of 20 sectoral collective agreements) (Lužar, 2016):

- women in demanding managerial jobs;
- balanced representation of both sexes in procedures and institutions of social dialogue;
- reduction of full-time working hours;
- limits on overtime work;
- flexible, family-friendly scheduling of working hours;
- enabling working at home and working at another location;
- annual leave;
- absence due to family obligations;

- adaptation of work to school/kindergarten hours;
- return to work after parental leave;
- allowing for care needs of elderly family members;
- promoting active fatherhood;
- differences in pay related to family obligations.

The analysis showed that work-life balance measures that support gender equality have not been systematically included in collective agreements. Only two (those for the electrical industry and for the textile, clothing and leather industry) out of 20 reached a value of 50 out of 100, while other collective agreements reached between 0 and 30. For instance, measures like 'returning to work after parental leave' or 'measures for the parents of first-grade children or children who start attending kindergarten' are completely absent (Lužar, 2016).

*Little attention is also paid to* (Lužar, 2016):

- workers who care for elderly family members (10% of collective agreements);
- regulation of balanced representation of both sexes in institutions of social dialogue (15% of collective agreements);
- women in leading positions (20% of collective agreements);
- general reduction of full-time work (20% of collective agreements);
- restrictions on overtime (20% of collective agreements).

*Some attention in collective agreements is paid to* (Lužar, 2016):

- monitoring the difference in pay related to family obligations (25% of collective agreements);
- adjusting working hours to family obligations (40% of collective agreements);
- the rights of fathers (40% of collective agreements).

*More attention regarding work–life balance is devoted to* (Lužar, 2016):

- a person's place of work (60% of collective agreements); annual leave (65% of collective agreements);
- absence from work due to family obligations (90% of collective agreements).

### *Employers' view*

The GEQUAL project included a survey of employers regarding the importance of work–life measures in employment relations, their relevance and impact in practice and the benefits or obstacles when implementing them in collective agreements. The Association of Employers of Slovenia (hereinafter AES), as a participating partner in the project, gathered data through an online survey in April and May 2015 among 421 Slovenian companies. Most respondents were women (79%), employed mostly in large (30%) and medium-sized companies (35%). A smaller share of respondents came from micro companies (16%) and small firms (20%) (Lužar, 2016).

One-fifth of the respondents (19%) were involved in collective bargaining at company level and 5% at sectoral level, while 4% of respondents were members of the AES Section Committee. Most of the respondents (85%) were from companies without the Family-Friendly Enterprise Certificate. This certificate (basic or full) is awarded to Slovenian companies who are aware of their social responsibility, based on the principle of employee–management cooperation, with an emphasis on work–life balance (Lužar, 2016).

The results showed that in companies with the basic or full Family-Friendly Enterprise Certificate, women, ZDS Section Committee members and those not involved in collective bargaining at sectoral and/or company level find measures for better reconciliation of work and family responsibilities very important and think they should be implemented across the board at company, sectoral and national levels (Lužar, 2016).

Respondents involved in collective bargaining consider that a comprehensive approach to implementing work–life measures is less important but confirm its positive effects, which include greater satisfaction and sense of belonging for their employees (Lužar, 2016).

*The most important work–life balance measures were defined by participants as (Lužar, 2016):*

- family-friendly scheduling of working time;
- measures to accommodate the parents of first-grade children or children who start attending kindergarten.

*Less important measures were defined as those promoting (Lužar, 2016):*

- more balanced use of parental rights between both parents;
- work at home at the request of the worker;
- special measures to foster a better work–family balance for fathers;

- additional paid leave due to family obligations.

#### *Trade union view*

The Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia (hereinafter AFTUS) carried out a survey among trade union representatives, involved in the collective bargaining process at all three levels, in April 2015. The research sample included 69 respondents who fully completed the survey, and was gender-balanced (49% of women and 51% of men). Most respondents (57%) were aged 46–64, followed by those aged 36–45 (29%). Almost half the respondents (48%) were company trade union representatives, 19% were sectoral trade union leaders, 16% trade union leaders or advisers at regional level, and 12% external trade union leaders or AFTUS advisers. Some 6% could not be included in any of the above-mentioned categories (Lužar, 2016).

Among all the respondents, the greatest importance to measures for reconciliation of work and family was given by women, younger respondents (aged up to 35 years), those who work in the public sector and respondents who negotiate only at company level (Lužar, 2016).

The results showed that almost 93% of representatives find that measures for a better reconciliation of work and family in collective agreements are very important for regulating employment relationships and that they should be agreed at different levels of social dialogue.

The most important work–life balance measures, as defined by the respondents, were (Lužar, 2016):

- measures for the parents of first-grade children or children who are starting kindergarten;
- family-friendly scheduling of working time;
- limiting the posting of workers with family obligations to work in another place.

*However, trade union representatives found the following measures less important* (Lužar, 2016):

- additional paid leave due to family obligations;
- support of childcare by the employers;
- working at home at the request of the worker.

The largest obstacles to integrating these measures were insufficient awareness of them on the part of employers and employers' reluctance to incorporate them as atypical measures or 'soft' rules. Among the positive effects of measures for promoting an improved reconciliation

of work and family, respondents cited increased satisfaction, greater confidence on the part of workers in their employer, reduced stress, and increased productivity (Lužar, 2016).

Collective agreements in Slovenia present one of the fundamental instruments for regulating the employment relationship as their coverage is high and social partners can, through collective bargaining, contribute a great deal to the reduction of gender inequalities (Lužar, 2016).

The results of the GEQUAL project showed that two-thirds of Slovenian employers and 93% of trade union representatives thought measures to facilitate the coordination of work and family obligations were key to a good employment relationship and should be incorporated and linked at all levels of collective agreements (Lužar, 2016).

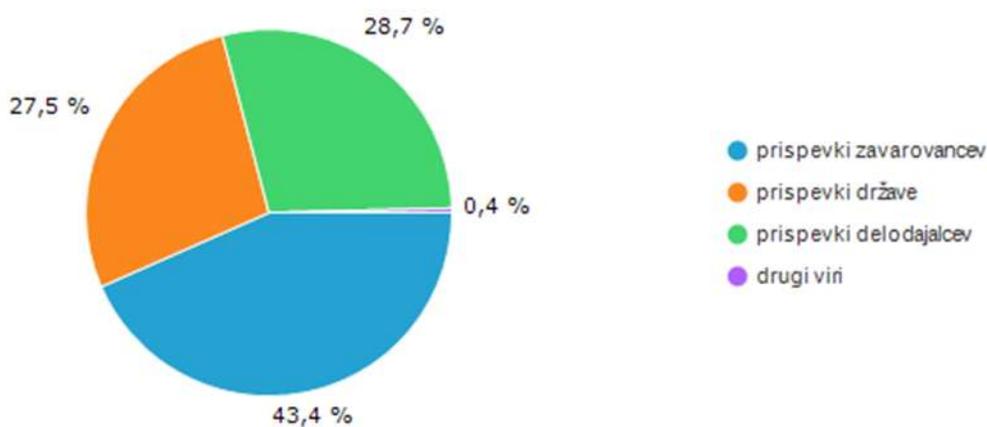
Among the most important work–life balance measures, cited by employers as well as employees, were measures for the parents of first-grade children or children who are starting kindergarten, and family-friendly scheduling of working time. Most respondents perceived the impact of implementing these measures as positive and recognised them as most effective in promoting employees' greater satisfaction and increased sense of belonging and decreasing levels of stress (Lužar, 2016).

The report also highlights that the largest obstacles to the adoption of the most important work–life balance measures are some employers' lack of awareness of them and employers' reluctance to incorporate them as 'soft' rules, since they are completely absent from their collective agreements. However, more attention is devoted to the place of work, annual leave, and absence from work due to family obligations, which are recognised as part of the reconciliation of work and family life. In addition, since the role of social partners in promoting equal opportunities in the labour market is crucial, the process of collective bargaining offers an opportunity for introducing a variety of approaches and good practices in reconciling work and family into collective agreements (Lužar, 2016).

*(iii) The types of funding involved such as state, charity vs private sector providers and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners\**

Child and family support programs in Slovenia are financed from different sources - e.g., the state finances the centres for social work; child and family counselling centres are financed from municipalities; NGOs child and family support programs are financed from public and EU tenders, municipalities, private donations; public kindergarten and elementary schools are financed mainly from municipalities. In 2018, a total of 10,092 million EUR was allocated to social protection programmes in Slovenia, which is 3.7% more than in 2017. Compared to the previous year, total expenditure on these programmes was higher mainly due to higher

expenditure on programmes in the fields of old age, sickness and health care and the areas of family and children (in the area of family and children GDP was 1.8%). From social protection expenditure in 2018, compared to 2017, expenditure on family and children field increased (by 4.7%), age field (by 4.4%), illness and health care field (by 3.0%), death of breadwinner families field (by 1.8%) and accommodation field (by 10%). Expenditure on unemployment field decreased slightly (by 0.9%). Expenditure on disability field remained at about the same level as in 2017. Sources of financing social protection programs, Slovenia, 2018 (below) (SORS, 2018):



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Blue colour - contributions of policyholders

Orange – contributions of state

Green – employer contributions

Violet – other resources

(SORS, 2018)

*(iv) Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations*

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One of the social policy monitors is IRSSW. In 2016 IRSSW, at the request of the MLFSAEO, resumed studies after more than ten years, the basic goal of which was to analyse children's

living conditions (0-18 years) and the quality of their life in Slovenia. Similar studies were carried out at the IRSSW in 2004–2005, when an analysis entitled *Children and Youth in Transition Society: An Analysis of the Situation in Slovenia* (relating to the population of children and adolescents) and an analysis published in 2009/1, *Between Childhood and Adulthood: Analysis of the Situation of Young People in Slovenia 2009/2* (which referred to the population of children and adolescents aged between 15 and 29) (Črnak Meglič & Kobal Tomc, 2017).

*(v) Limitations in national and official data and statistics\**

National statistics in Slovenia is a professionally independent activity of implementing the programme of statistical surveys. Main principles of national statistics in Slovenia are (SORS, 2020):

- neutrality,
- objectivity
- professional independence,
- rationality,
- statistical confidentiality and
- transparency.

Statistics in Slovenia are obtained and submitted on the basis of the use of scientifically recognised and professionally appropriate methods (SORS, 2020).

**24.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision. What are the prominent policy and practice developments related to family support services from children’s rights, social equality and evidence-informed perspectives?**

*(i) What are the pressing policy, practice and research challenges impeding developments?*

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In a comparative perspective, Slovenia achieves a relatively high level of quality of life for families and children, as it constantly ranks at the top of various international scales (Save the children, 2017; OECD, n.d.) and indicators, including: a low risk and a continued reduction in the risk of poverty and social exclusion of children; access to legal protection for children; child justice. Many family policy measures – e. g. the rights to maternity, parental, and paternity benefits - are recognized internationally as examples of good practice. Family policy in Slovenia stresses the protection and quality of life of families and children; is inclusive to all types of families; protects children's rights in the family; emphasizes the importance of reconciling work

and family life, ensuring equal opportunities regardless of gender; sets up a wide range of programmes and services for families; and contributes to the costs of facilitating child support and caring for families in specific life circumstances. Many of the positive elements of Slovenian current family support policy and provision are based on the heritage of our past socialist political and economic system, founded, above all, on solidarity, gender equality, and social security principles. Thus, one of the main policy, practice and research challenges is how to preserve and protect those qualities from the pressures and demands dictated by the neoliberal political economy (on the national, EU, and global level), how to stop some of the less positive trends (e.g. higher housing, public health care, and social deprivation, in comparison to the EU average) and tendencies (e.g. to ignore the gender equality in the labour market, or to encourage nationalist and discriminative discourse regarding the immigrant adult individuals, as well as children and families, or Roma minority children and families). Though equal in majority of rights with heterosexual couples, LGBT partners still cannot get married, adopt children, and have artificial insemination, and consider themselves as legally invisible, and socially excluded (Legebitra, 2019; World Bank, 2018; ERA - LGBTI Equal Rights Association for Western Balkans and Turkey, 2017; Magić and Maljevac, 2016).

*(ii) What are the pressing gaps in provision? \**

The most pressing gaps in provision of services can be observed in unequal access of certain populations of children and families to their legally guaranteed rights. This inequality is mostly due to their citizenship, residence status, ethnicity, economic status, and age. In education, health and social welfare system, immigrant, Roma, materially deprived, LGBT, etc. children and their families — often coping with multiple challenges, e. g. poverty, language barriers, disabilities, invisibility, discriminated ethnicity, inadequate housing, weak social networks — are not provided with suitable enough (in quantity and quality) support to have equal opportunities: for educational progress and success; for constructive upbringing and socialization process aimed at social inclusion, psychosocial safety, active participation; for appropriate and timely health care. Parents increasingly struggle with precarious work, and high rents, while the needed social etc. provisions are late, insufficient or even non-existent (Amnesty International, 2019; Keuc and Križanič, 2019; OECD, 2019, 2020, n.d.; EUROSTAT, 2020).

*A pressing policy response to support children and families in the context of COVID-19 (summarized after Dominelli et al., 2020).*

*Societal measures addressing social consequences of COVID-19*

*The extent of isolation*

All data below are taken from the Governmental web page on the COVID-19 disease (Government of the Republic of Slovenia 2020a). The measures and the timeline are identified below:

On 6 March, the first measures were adopted. These included were a prohibition of visits in hospitals and residential homes for older people. Visits were again allowed with the limitations of no body contact and a distance of 2 meters on 11 May. Personal contact like holding hands was allowed from 25 May.

On 7 March, the Minister of Health signed an Order imposing a ban on gatherings at events in public places. On 9 March, all preventive programmes in hospitals were suspended and all non-urgent specialist examinations were cancelled until further notice to be rescheduled at a later date. Only acute illnesses and conditions that could lead to a deterioration of health were addressed. The Order prohibiting indoor public gatherings was amended to reduce the upper limit from 500 to 100 people. The timeframe that developed was as follows:

On 12 March, the Government *declared an epidemic*. All kindergartens, schools and universities were closed, starting on 16 March. Educational institutions for adolescents with emotional and behavioural disorders referred thereto by a court are excepted from this measure. The Government adopted the proposal for the Act on the Intervention Measure of Partial Wage Compensation. Parents who stay at home to care for their children are entitled to 50% wage compensation. Healthcare professionals are banned from entering infected areas or areas at immediate risk of coronavirus outbreaks, i.e., the countries with identified coronavirus cases. This Order lays down the duty of healthcare professionals and associates to perform their activities under specific circumstances, such as the ban or restriction on taking annual leave and the restriction of the right to strike and to training.

On 14 March, the Government announced social distancing and isolation. Public transport was banned on 16 March when the Government issued the Ordinance to temporarily ban the provision and sale of goods and services directly to consumers in the territory of the Republic of Slovenia. These included accommodation, catering, wellness, sports and recreational outlets, cinematographic and cultural facilities, hairdressing, cosmetics and pedicure services, gaming and other similar activities with some exceptions like stores selling food and pharmacies.

On 19 March, the Government issued the Ordinance on the temporary prohibition of public gatherings at public meetings and public events, and other events in public places. Individuals were allowed to move in, access and stay in a public place, while keeping a safe distance from other persons for the purposes of: getting to work, including agricultural work;

accessing emergency and necessary services in food stores, pharmacies, drugstores, gas stations, post offices, municipal utility services; providing care services and assistance to persons in need of support; accessing services for persons with special needs; and accessing public parks and other areas for walking. These exceptions may be defined in detail by a mayor through a decision that is made public for an individual local community, depending on the specific needs within that community.

On 30 March, a law on the temporary release of prisoners with less than 6 months of sentence still to serve came into effect. This law was adopted after the first case of coronavirus among prisoners that was diagnosed on 16 March and the second case on 29 March.

On 16 April, the government started to ease restrictions. It allowed some stores to open from 1 May. These were mainly stores selling mostly construction and installation materials, technical goods or furniture, specialised shops for selling motor vehicles and bicycles, dry cleaners and repair shops, the personal collection of goods or food at pick-up points ensuring minimum contact with consumers, hair and beauty salons, certain sports and recreational services, pet grooming salons also following distancing measures.

On 29 April, the Government further lifted the prohibition of movement outside the municipality of permanent or temporary residence.

On 15 May, the Government adopted the Ordinance announcing *the end to the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) epidemic*, which was initially declared on 12 March. Since the risk of spreading COVID-19 still persists, the general and specific measures will continue to apply until 31 May. After this date, any measures will be decided on the basis of the epidemiological situation in Slovenia and abroad.

All shops, restaurants and services were opened from 1 June. Most of the economy started operating, but there were substantial problems in some branches like the car industry, trucking industry, construction, and tourism. There are still limitations in kindergartens, but all pupils in primary school from grades 1-9 are back at school. Secondary school pupils will not return to school this scholastic year. They will finish this year's studies via online learning. Universities are still closed, although staff are allowed into the premises, but there is yet no information on when they will be re-opened.

#### *State measures to address social problems and needs*

The state issued three packages of measures to address the needs of the economy and of individuals. They were as follows:

The first package of measures included mostly measures for covering the costs of salaries and lost income. These were limited incentives for individuals, and not for the economy and employment. These measures meant that:

- Aid was provided to all full-time students residing in the Republic of Slovenia in the form of a one-off crisis allowance amounting to 150 Euros, which was paid by 30 April 2020.
- For large families with three children, the Act proposed an allowance of 100 Euros, and for families with four or more children an allowance of 200 Euros, in addition to the allowances that they already receive.
- Pensioners will be entitled to a one-off solidarity allowance in order to ensure better social security for the most vulnerable pensioners whose pensions are less than 700 Euros. The allowance will be paid as three different amounts depending on the amount of the existing pension: 300 Euros for pensions up to 500 Euros; 230 Euros for pensions ranging from 501 to 600 Euros; and 130 Euros for pensions ranging from 601 to 700 Euros.
- Recipients of financial social assistance and income support are also eligible to receive a one-off allowance amounting to 150 Euros.

The second package addressed the economy and employment. The measures it contained aimed to help the economy and preserve jobs, which also included self-employed people. The Government will cover part of salaries (compulsory insurance) and compensate for lost income for those who stayed at home due to the closure of a workplace or taking care of children due to closure of schools and kindergartens, and introduced a basic income for self-employed persons. There were no measures for other social groups in need.

The third package also covered the economy and employment as a significant increase in registered unemployment was observed by the end of April compared to March. Subsidised short-time work replaces subsidised temporary lay-off until 31 December. To assist tourism, the government will grant a voucher to each Slovene citizen to the value of 200 Euros, and for minors, a voucher to the value of 50 Euros. These vouchers can be redeemed until 31 December 2020 (Government of the Republic of Slovenia 2020a).

#### *Status of social welfare services, authorities, and professionals in media*

The media reported mostly on the situation in care homes for older people, on violence against women and children, on the problem of isolation in relation to homeless people and on food poverty. The articles about care homes for older people were raising issues of the large number of infected older people, on their access to health care and admission to hospitals that only

accepted the most serious cases. Issues like whether care homes for older people are health or social welfare institutions were problematised. The lack of doctors and nurses in care homes and the quality of life and the human rights of residents were raised. Most deaths happened in just three care homes. The extent of isolation rose when care homes were totally closed to outside visitors for two months. This included relatives who were not allowed to visit, even when a relative was dying, and the lack of consistent information on what was happening in care homes. These points were most intriguing for journalists and a number of NGOs working in this field.

The issue of violence against women and children was the second issue that was raised by NGOs and commented upon by the media. Here, the question of the social services response to the violence was problematic, especially in respect of child protection, and the lack of consistent information. The results of the survey undertaken by the Institute of Criminology by the Faculty of Law at the University of Ljubljana was presented as a report on criminal acts in the time of the coronavirus crisis (Plesničar et al., 2020). They found out that although the number of all criminal acts declined during the coronavirus crises, the number of domestic violence cases rose. They revealed that mandatory isolation actually maximises the risk of violence and maltreatment occurring within families, and minimises access to help and support.

The issue of poverty, especially food poverty was raised after the closure of schools and the food delivery programmes. In Slovenia, pupils have food including a hot lunch provided by the schools. When the schools were closed, no food was provided. The Red Cross and Caritas programmes of food delivery were also closed for direct services. Here some good practices were presented in the media where local communities and various NGOs, e.g., for homeless people, drug-users, older people and children, responded to this problem by establishing meals-on-wheels services or delivered food in the community.

No media reports can be found on any other issues like the lack of participation of social welfare professionals in governmental planning of measures against the coronavirus crisis. It is obvious that health professionals and economists are deemed the most competent in this field, and social welfare which includes social workers is somehow not considered as having any of the required expertise.

The most prominent concerns expressed in the media covered schooling and isolation. There have been broad debates on whether on-line schooling offers the same quality of teaching, and how pupils be prepared for final exams and the matura. Also, the organisation of family life was an important topic in the media, especially the support given to children's schooling. Here, it was recognised that home-schooling can be a source of deepening social inequalities.

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## *Social services responses*

### *The mode of operation of social services*

There is a lack of information to give a consistent and correct overview of the mode of operation of social services. What is known is that they responded differently. Some closed their doors and workers stayed at home waiting to be called to duty. Some of them organised in shifts, so that the service was not closed but access became restricted, and a reduced number of workers were at work. Some of them worked from home via telephones and computers. Social services have a central web page (ACSW, Work 2020) with basic information for users and they also have a central office where no additional information is available. They have asked service users to come to the centre only in emergencies, advising them to use telephone or email instead. If they are claiming social benefits, they should submit an online form or leave it in the post-box at their local centre. Many NGOs also worked from home via telephone and computers. Day centres for homeless people and people with mental health problems were closed. No admissions to care homes were possible. It is not yet known how shelter for victims of violence or crisis centres for children and young people have operated. Were they available or did they also close their doors? We assume that practices differed across Slovenia, but that has yet to be explored. Children with learning difficulties that had close relatives, were sent home from residential homes. In Slovenia, these are called group homes. Only young people with learning difficulties who did not have anyone to go to were allowed to stay.

### *Guidelines for social services from responsible authorities*

Slovenian social services are state funded and there are 63 of them around the country. Social services are authorised to provide services for families and individuals in need of support and protection. This includes those experiencing problems either between family members or when they are deprived of financial, housing or other resources. However, they are also authorised to protect children in cases of violence and maltreatment, as well as other victims of violence. Social services have departments for family affairs, adoption and foster care, children, and youth work, for people with mental health problems and for people with disabilities. The network of centres of social work as they are called in Slovenia, is complemented by the network of supporting programmes offered by NGOs and private providers in very different fields and services. These cover homelessness, violence against children and women, youth work, programmes for older people, counselling, and therapy among many others. The second network of services are care homes for older people and the third one covers special care homes for people with disabilities and mental health problems. These also provide financial social assistance.

On 18 March 2020, the MLFSAEO issued new guideline for the protection of users and staff members and volunteers in the field of social protection (Government of the Republic of Slovenia 2020c). These measures included:

- A restriction of personal contacts in CSWs. Exceptions were emergency situations (child protection is determined by the Family Act, Family Violence) where the protection of persons is needed. Otherwise, social services are advised to work with the use of digital tools (email, computer, telephone).
- Admission to crisis centres and supervised contacts between parents and children (in situations of restrictions in contacts between a parent and a child). Crisis centres are not closed but have to comply with rules issued by the National Institute of Public Health (hereinafter: NIPH). In cases of new admissions, they also have to operate according to the rules, and what primarily applies is a 14-day quarantine. Supervised contacts are not advised, as physical contacts are restricted for people not living in the same unit.
- Residential homes and day-care facilities for children and adults with learning disabilities were closed except for cases where no other care could be provided.
- Day centres for a variety of groups: older people, people with mental health problems, children and young people, were closed down, but staff have to be available for emergency situations, so that users can call them or can send them emails.
- The same applies to counselling and therapy services and programmes.
- Residential programmes (groups or community homes where people reside) stay open until the first case of infection by the coronavirus. They have to respect NIPH instructions and when newly admitted, they have to respect the rules on quarantine.
- Day centres for homeless people have been closed down. Instead, street work for the supply of food to homeless people is encouraged.
- All other social programmes have been cancelled and practitioners have started working on-line or via the telephone.

At the end of May 2020, the Government of Slovenia declared the end of the epidemic and all programmes started operating but with some strict rules to be observed (ACSW, 2020). This included physical distancing and users having to call to make appointments. Users are not allowed to stay in premises longer than needed, have to wear masks, and respect other measures set by the NIPH. In addition, visitors are allowed into care homes for older people if they uphold the same instructions listed above for the CSWs.

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### *Use of digital tools in working with clients and teamwork among staff*

As we (the authors) have already stated, the majority of contact between social workers and service users have been reduced to telephone, email or to make appointments for face-to-face contact. No report yet exists on how this approach has been working, what it was possible to do online, and how this affects people in need of services and social workers. There is no information on how staff members have communicated between themselves, either.

### *Main concerns expressed by social services*

Not much can be found about the response of social services. Mostly there are reports from care homes for older people that expressed many concerns due to the lack of help they received from the authorities. They felt left alone with very serious situations to address. They felt their work has not been appreciated because they were 'attacked' by public opinion claiming that they are not doing enough to prevent the coronavirus from spreading, and also that the restriction of contacts especially for people with dementia or those who were terminally ill, has been inhuman. Such opinion affected staff that actually worked very hard and were exposed to infection to a much greater extent than the general population due to the lack of masks and other medical protection equipment. They felt as having been 'sacrificed' somehow and marginalised in these difficult times. This provided a reason for a protest organised by the Association of Care Homes for Older People (RTV Slovenia, 2020). On 24 April, they stopped working in all care homes throughout Slovenia, and went out of the buildings for 15 minutes. Their basic claim was those governmental measures to protect older people were insufficient, and to a great extent wrong.

Apart from what was going on among the elderly, some associations for homeless people pointed out the many problems that related to the specific situation of homelessness. For example, the paradox of isolation; that it is only possible if one has a place to isolate in. There were also reports from these associations that outreach is extremely difficult due to lack of human resources. They also made the point that the most deprived homeless people will make do without the service. They accepted donations in money and in-kind to at least cover the basic needs of homeless persons (Kings of the Streets, 2020).

### *Social work responses*

#### *Most affected groups defined by social workers*

The main source for this Report is the web page of the Association of Social Workers Slovenia (hereinafter: ASWS) and some diaries written by social workers for a research project undertaken by the authors of this *Report*. Groups that social workers highlight as being most

affected are single-parent families that experience many problems due to the closure of the primary and secondary schools, and who need support in helping children around schoolwork and also around the coordination of work and family obligations. They are also writing about lonely older people in the community, people with mental health problems and others that live alone and have a weak social support network. Also, families with low educational attainment experienced problems in helping schoolchildren in distance learning and homework. Major problems that are frequently highlighted by social workers relate to violence and neglect, mostly against women and children. Isolation has 'fuelled' violent behaviour since there has been no mechanism of approaching families and it has been very hard for the victims to report violence because they were trapped in the same space as the perpetrator. More in-depth insight into affected groups requires the obtaining of additional information.

*Main obstacles to approaching and supporting communities and clients/service users*

Restriction of personal contact and the use of digital tools were also problematised. Digital tools are not to be blamed as they offer some contact, but users of services that are experiencing poverty, deprivation or/and social exclusion do not have access to computers and do not know how to use on-line programmes and tools. The most common source of communication is the telephone which has many limitations because there is no face-to-face contact which remains a very important means of communication for social workers.

*Critical evaluation of state measures*

We, the authors, do not have enough information to elaborate on these measures. The ASWS published a letter on their web page (ASWS, 2020) that is critical of governmental measures. The main criticism relates to the absence of social workers among the other professionals in the groups that designed the measures regarding COVID-19. The letter also pointed to the invisibility of social workers and social services in the media.

Another problem is a lack of information on the social services webpages. Information was available only on its central webpage, and most of the users of services were not aware of it. The ASWS also pointed out that social workers are too silent, not visible enough and almost passive during these times of crisis.

They are also pointing to the many good practices that were developed as a sign of solidarity among people. People organised initiatives on a local level and helped with food delivery, offering transportation with their own cars to people that needed it as all public transport had been stopped.

*The role of national associations of social workers in supporting practitioners during the coronavirus crisis*

The ASWS supported practitioners mostly by publishing letters that pointed to problems in relation to the closure of social services (as discussed above). They also encouraged social workers to be proactive and start working in the communities. They published and translated the note from International Federation of Social Workers on the response of social workers to the COVID-19 disease. They helped researchers extend invitations to social workers to participate in three research projects that were initiated by different research groups.

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## 25 SPAIN - National report on family support policy & provision

**Isabel M. Bernedo, Lucía González-Pasarín, Victoria Hidalgo, María José Rodrigo**

### 25.1 Trends and issues related to demography

*(i) Fertility rates;*

In Spain, between 2010 and 2013, the fertility rate decreased gradually from 1.37 to 1.27. In 2014, it experienced a slight increase (1.32) and rose minimally to 2016 (1.34), when it dropped until 1.26 (2018) (Table 1).

Table 1. *Fertility rates*

Year	Fertility Rate
2010	1.37
2013	1.27
2014	1.32
2015	1.33
2016	1.34
2017	1.31
2018	1.26
2019	N/A

*(ii) Families with children by number of children; Include data for the following years:*

Table 2. *Households by number of children*<sup>51</sup>

Year	Number of children (thousands of households)			
	0	1	2	3+
2013	3.943,3	4.134,3	3.266,9	668,7
2014	3.978,6	4.126,8	3.270,2	691,5
2015	3.874,8	4.184,7	3.298,0	667,9
2016	3.861,9	4.178,0	3.342,1	673,6
2017	3.928,5	4.231,5	3.265,7	695,0
2018	3.913,9	4.222,8	3.291,0	662,9
2019	3.937,2	4.210,7	3.248,6	647,3

Households without children decreased from 2013 to 2016, since then, it experienced and there was an increase (+75,3). Households composed of one child increased from 2013 to 2019, while households composed of two children experienced a slight increase from 2013 to 2016. From then until 2019, there has been a reduction in the number of households with two children. Households composed of three or more children increased from 2013 to 2017 (+26,3). Since then, they have experienced a decrease (-47,7).

*(iii) Percentage of the population from 0 to 19;*

The Percentage of the Spanish population from 0 to 19 remained constant at 19.8% from 2010 to 2018. In 2019, there was a slight reduction (19.7%) (Table 3).

<sup>51</sup> Note: Data retrieved from  
<https://www.ine.es/jaxi/Tabla.htm?path=/t20/p274/serie/prov/p01/I0/&file=01014.px&L=0>

Table 3. *Population 19 years and under*

Year	%
2010	19.8
2015	19.8
2016	19.8
2017	19.8
2018	19.8
2019	19.7

*(iv) Percentage of population over working (retiring) age;*

Over the period 2010-2019, the percentage of the population over working age grew substantially, from 16.8 to 19.7% (Table 4).

Table 4. *Population 19 years and under*

Year	%
2010	16.8
2015	18.5
2016	18.7
2017	19.0
2018	19.2
2019	19.4

*(v) Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities;*

(Identify vulnerable groups as documented in the social policy literature)

In Spain, the ethnic or cultural vulnerable minorities are the following: the Roma people, Hispanic minorities of central America and south America, Arab minorities, and Eastern Europe minorities.

With respect to the Roma people, in Spain there are 750,000, 10,000 of whom live in shacks; however, they are 70% less than 27 years ago. It is a very young group, so 66% of people are under thirty years old. Poverty and exclusion affect more than 80%; 46% are considered extremely poor, and the child poverty rate stands at 89% compared to 30.7% for the general population.

In relation to the other vulnerable minorities, according to the Spanish Commission for Refugee Aid (Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado (CEAR) (2019), in 2018 Spain became the main country of entry to Europe with more than 65,383 irregular arrivals by sea and land, almost triple that of the previous year. Our country received 51% of maritime arrivals to the EU through the Mediterranean.

Regarding asylum applications, in 2018 Spain was the fourth country in Europe with 54,065 asylum applications, 74% more than the previous year. It represents 8% of the total of those presented in the EU. Venezuela was again the main country of origin, with 19,280 asylum applications, almost double the previous year. Colombia (8,650), Syria (2,775), Honduras (2,410) and El Salvador (2,275) completed the list of the top five countries of origin.

According to data provided by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE) [Statistics National Institute] (2020), the number of foreigners increased by 395,168 people during 2019 to a total of 5,235,375 as of January 1, 2020. This increase responded, for the most part, to a positive migratory balance 444,587 people.

According to the UN (2019), immigrants in Spain come mainly from Morocco (11.66%), Romania (10.20%) and Ecuador (6.80%).

*(vi) Migration patterns;*

(Include immigration and emigration statistics)

Focusing on immigration patterns, from 2013 to 2018 there was a significant increase from 280.772 to 643.684 immigrants of all geopolitical entities. During the first three years, the rise was slow, but became rapid in the three years that followed.

Referring to those who are not from EU countries and with low human development of the country of previous residence, between 2013 and 2014, there was a minimally reduction. The following year, it remained virtually unchanged. Finally, from 2015 to 2018, it grew considerably from 16.464 to 29.017 (Table 5). Regarding the number of immigrants aged under 15, the first three years stayed virtually constant (2.932, 2013; 2.799, 2014; 2.928, 2015). Between 2015 and 2016, it rose sharply, reaching 3.936. It then experienced a sudden drop to 3.361 and, in 2018, increased once again to reach the 2016 figure (3.936) (Table 6).

Regarding emigration patterns, according to INE (2020), since 2010 to 2013, there was a significant increase from 403.379 to 532.30. From then until 2019, there was a sharp decline reaching 297.368, with the exception of a rebound in 2017. There is a male dominance over female.

Table 5. *Number of immigrants*

Year	Total
2013	17.974
2014	16.129
2015	16.464
2016	19.763
2017	21.786
2018	29.017

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

Table 6. *Number of immigrants aged under 15*

Year	Total
2013	2.932

2014	2.799
2015	2.928
2016	3.936
2017	3.361
2018	3.936

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

## 25.2 Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles and children's living arrangements

### (i) Family household types;

Data from family household types is available for 2010 and 2015. Data source was Eurostat Databased (2020). In this period:

- Household composed of one adult increased by 2%, from 22.1 to 24.1%.
- Household composed of one adult with dependent children rose by 1%, from 2.7 to 3.7%.
- Household composed of two adults stayed virtually unchanged. In 2010, they accounted for 27.5%, and in 2015 for 27.6%.
- Household composed of two adults with dependent children, remained almost unchanged. In 2010, they accounted for 26.7% and in 2015 for 26.9%.
- Household composed of three or more adults reduced by 1.8%, from 13.3 to 11.5%.
- Household composed of three or more adults with dependent children experienced a decrease from 7.7 to 6.2%.

### (ii) Marriage and divorce rates;

In relation to marriage trends, since 2010 to 2018, the crude rate stayed virtually unchanged with values between 3.6 and 3.7. Specifically, in 2018 it stood at 3.5 (Table 7). The same pattern can be observed in the first marriage rate in females. In this period, it is between 0.42 and 0.48.

In 2018, the first marriage rate in females was 0.46. There is no data from the year 2012. The mean age at first marriage for females grew a mean of 3.4 years since 2010; from 30.9 to 33.5.

Table 7. *Crude marriage rate*

Year	%
2010	3.6
2015	3.6
2016	3.7
2017	3.7
2018	3.5

Note. Eurostat Database (2020)

Regarding the crude divorce rate, it remained almost stable since 2010 to 2018 with values between 2 and 2.2. During this period, it reduced by 0.2, from 2.2 to 2.0 (Table 8). The number of divorces per 100 marriages decreased between 2010 and 2017, from 62 to 56, with little change in these years (Table 9).

Table 8. *Crude divorce rate*

Year	%
2010	2.2
2015	2.1
2016	2.1
2017	2.1

2018 2.0

Note. Eurostat Database (2020)

Table 9. *Number of divorces per 100 marriages*

Year	%
2010	62.0
2015	57.9
2016	56.0
2017	57.2
2018	N/A

Note. Eurostat Database (2020)

*(iii) Lone-parent families;*

The percentage of one-parent families from 2010 to 2015 experienced an increase of 1%, from 2.7 to 3.7%.

According to INE (2019), lone-parent households (made up of only one parent with children) were mostly integrated in 2019 by mother with children. Specifically, there were 1,530,600 (81.1% of the total), compared to 356,900 for a father with children.

The number of lone-parent households increased by 0.5% compared to 2018. 40.5% of the homes of mothers with children was a widow, 38.8% separated or divorced, 14.4% single and 6.3% married.

*(iv) New family forms such as same-sex couple households;*

According to INE (2020), regarding the number of male-sex couple households, between 2014 and 2016, there was an increase from 49.7 to 59.9 and decline to 53.9 in 2018. In 2019, it rose to again to 60.5. The number of female-sex couple households is less than their counterparts',

but its trend is quite similar. It grew between 2014 and 2015, from 37.6 to 39.5, and decreased to 30.5 in 2017. Since then, it went up again to 37.4 in 2019.

In relation to the number of common-law partner/ de facto partnership, between 2014 and 2015 there was a rapid increase from 1,581 to 1,614,3, which reduced slightly to 1,602,9 in 2016. Since then, there was a gradual growth to 1,701,8 in 2019. The number of heterosexual common-law partners follows the same pattern. In 2019, there were 1,654,2. Less frequent are same-sex common-law partners; particularly females. The number of male-sex common-law partners rose gradually over the period 2014-2019, from 21.9 to 30.3. Regarding the number of female-sex common-law partners, it remained virtually unchanged between 2014 and 2017, when it rose to 17.4 in 2019.

The number of stepfamilies, by the total number of couples and cohabitation with non-common children, saw a decrease between 2013 and 2016, from 348,3 to 320,2. Since then, it has risen to 422 in 2019.

\*Unit: thousands of couples

*(v) Family structures and changes across social groups;*

Family diversity has been growing across all social groups. Family types are the following: two-parent, one-parent, kinship, foster care, adoptive, stepfamilies, same-sex parent, and intercultural families.

*(vi) Children and youth living in institutions;*

In 2010, 15,476 people under 18 were in residential care. Until 2016, the number dipped to 14,104 followed by a sharp rise to 21.283 in 2018.

There are more boys than girls in residential care. In 2018, there were 15,437 boys and 5,846 girls. In addition, there are more people under 18 from foreign countries in residential care than of Spanish nationality. In 2018, there were 11,803 children and youth of foreign nationality in residential care, and 9,480 from Spain. Regarding unaccompanied minors, there was a substantial increase since 2016, from 2,524 to 9,506 in 2018. Residential care accounts for 98% for all measures, as does male dominance (95%) over female (5%) (Statistical bulletin on child protection measures (BEMPI), Ministry of Health, Consumption and Social Welfare, 2018a).

*(vii) Children in out-of-home care such as foster care;*

According to the Statistical bulletin on child protection measures (BEMPI) (Ministry of Health, Consumption and Social Welfare, 2018a), in 2010, 58.30% of children and youth in care were in family foster care. In 2013, it rose by 3.5% and dropped by 13.9% to 47.90% in 2018.

The percentage of girls in family care under 18 is higher than that of boys. From 2012 to 2016, the percentage of boys was around 55%, and then dropped to 39.30% in 2018. For girls, there can be observed a slight reduction from 2012 to 2018, from 65% to 62%.

Regarding ethnic diversity, in the 2012-2018 period, the percentage of people under 18 years from Spain was around 60-65%; except in 2014 when it rose to 81%, and then declined to 65.10% in 2018. The percentage of foreign nationals remained stable between 2012 and 2015, from 29.1% to 31.6%. In 2015, it grew to 54.9% and dropped to 13.40% in 2018. In 2018, unaccompanied foreign minors in family foster care accounted for 1.90% (194), with a higher percentage of girls 67% than boys 33%.

In 2018, children with disabilities in family care comprised 40.50%; less than those without a disability (48.30%).

*(viii) Home-based support;*

In Spain, the Guide to social benefits and services for families 2019 (Ministry of Health, Consumption and Social Welfare, 2019a) shows us that according to Article 39.1 of the Spanish Constitution, "the public authorities shall ensure the social, economic and legal protection of the family". This means that all Public Administrations are responsible, within their competences, for providing families in need with economic aid or services for the fulfilment of their responsibilities, to attend to their basic needs, and to support them when they go through situations of special difficulty. In this sense, it should be taken into account that in our country there are three administrative levels: General State Administration, Autonomous Communities, and Local Corporations.

In 2017, the percentage of actions carried out within the framework of home-based support was 639,690 (25.54%). 266,614 families benefited from home-based support (32.25%) (Ministry of Health, Consumption and Social Welfare, 2019b).

Table 10. *Home-based support projects (Ministry of Health, Consumption and Social Welfare, 2018b)*

Kind of support	Families
Intervention and socio-family orientation	6.461
Positive parenting support	3.992

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Family counselling	20
Support in situations of family conflict	83
Support in situations of psychosocial difficulty or risk of exclusion	3.243

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### 25.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare

#### *(i) Poverty rates;*

The at-risk-of-poverty rate (ARP) indicates an increasing trend for Spain. In fact, regarding the poverty rates in population under 18, the at-risk-of-poverty percentage rate between 2010 and 2013 decreased from 29.3% to 27.5%. In 2014, it rose by 3% (30.5%) to decrease until 3.7% (26.8%) in 2018. The severe material deprivation rate was 7.4% in 2010, and reduced to 6.5% in 2018. The highest value was in 2014 (9.5%). Finally, the percentage at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion experimented a slight reduction between 2010 and 2013. In 2014, it rose from 3.26 % to 35.8%, and dropped by 6.3% in 2018 (Table 11).

In general, poverty rates in total population as well as the population under 18 were lower in 2018 than in 2010, but the highest values were reached in 2014.

On the other hand, from 2010 to 2018, the percentage of people at risk of poverty was between 20.4% and 22.3%. The lowest value reached was in 2013, while the highest was in 2016 and 21.5% in 2018. As regarding the severe material deprivation rate, between 2010 and 2014 it increased by 2.2% (from 4.9 to 7.1%) and reduced to 5.4% in 2018. In the percentage of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion followed a similar pattern. It increased by 3.1% between 2010 and 2014 (from 26.1 to 29.2%) and went down by 2.6% in 2018 (Table 11).

In general, poverty rates in 2018 were slightly higher than in 2010, but the highest values were reached in 2014.

Table 11. *At-risk-of-poverty rate (ARP)*

Year	ARP%	
	Children less than 18 years	Total
2010	33.3	20.7
2015	34.4	22.1
2016	32.9	22.3
2017	31.3	21.6
2018	29.5	21.5
2019	N/A	N/A

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

*(ii) Employment/unemployment rates;*

In relation to the unemployment rate (Table 12), in 2010, 19.9% of the population was unemployed. In 2014, it rose by 6.2%, and dropped significantly to 14.1% in 2019. The reason for this is due to a potential increase in economic activity.

Table 12. *Unemployment rate*

Year	%
2010	19.9
2015	22.1
2016	19.6
2017	17.2

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2018	15.3
2019	14.1

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Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

Regarding employment rates (Table 13), in 2010, 58.8% were employed, falling by 4% in 2013. Until 2018, the employment rate increased by 7.6% to 62.4%.

Table 13. *Employment rate*

Year	%
2010	58.8
2015	57,8
2016	59,5
2017	61,1
2018	62.4
2019	N/A

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Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

*(iii) Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage related to gender, age, ethnicity, migrant status and other social dimensions;*

According to the Statistics National Institute (2020), these are the data with respect to employment and gender, employment and age, and employment and nationality. Regarding *employment and gender*, both males and females followed the same pattern of employment. Between 2010 and 2013, there was a decrease in the number of people in employment. Until

2019, there was a gradual increase which eventually led to similar employment figures for 2010. However, the number of females employed has always been lower than the number of males.

In 2010, there was 8.300,8 females employed compared to 10.423,7 males. In 2019, there were 9.033,7 females employed compared to 10.745,9 males.

With respect to *employment* and *age*, from 2010 to 2019, the number of employed people who were between the ages of 35–44 and 16–24 remained virtually unchanged. In 2019, the former was 5.598,5 and the latter was 1.038,6. Those who were employed and were between the ages 45–54 and those who were 55 or more years old followed a similar employment trend. From 2010 to 2019, both groups of employed people grew gradually to 5.598,5 and 3.526,4 respectively. Finally, from 2010 to 2019, the group of employed people aged between 25–34 experienced a steady decrease to 3.526,4 in 2019. In conclusion, people between 35-54 have a higher employment rate, and those who are between 16 and 24 years of age have a lower employment rate.

In relation to *employment* and *nationality* (EU, rest of EU, Latin America, rest of the world, and statelessness) from 2010 to 2019, the number of employed people from EU, those from the rest of the world and stateless followed a similar employment pattern, increasing gradually. In 2019, the former was 944,3 employed and the latter 584,9. Those from the rest of UE remained virtually unchanged. In 2019, 151 were employed. Finally, the number of employed people from Latin America experienced a drop between 2010 and 2015, from 1.141,5 to 562. Until 2019, it went up to 719,8. In this way, between 2010 and 2012, there were more Latin American employed people than from other foreign nationalities, followed by EU, rest of the world, the stateless, and the rest of EU by far. From then to 2019, there were more employed people from EU than from Latin America. In conclusion, foreigners employed have always been far less than Spanish and, within the foreign nationality, those from the rest of EU.

*(iv) Patterns of education disadvantage;*

The public education system (offered to all children aged between three and 16) has brought about great improvements in the training and preparation of the Spanish population. However, the educational system needs to be strengthened in at least three aspects: a) to ensure that the greatest possible number of students obtain the school leaving certificate (the rate of early school leavers is as high as 24.9%); b) to foster higher enrolment in formal professional training; and c) to improve the level of educational attainment, currently below the OECD average (Programme for International Student Assessment, PISA, 2012).

All these aspects account for the high proportion of the adult population aged 25 to 64 with no more than a primary education (19%), a figure that highly conditions the probability of being unemployed.

*(v) Major social welfare trends such as disadvantage risks, welfare benefit receipt levels;*

According to INE (2020), with regard to *income distribution and inequality*, the S80/S20 ratio, used to measure income inequality, compares the sum of the incomes of the top 20% of the population with the lowest income to the top 20% of the population with the lowest income. From 2010 (referring to 2009 income) to 2013, it had remained at values between 6.2 and 6.5, increasing to 6.9 in 2015 (2014 income) and progressively decreasing to 2019 (2018 income), with a value of 5.9, one tenth less than the previous year.

Another indicator for analysing inequality is the Gini Index. This is a measure of inequality that takes the value 0 in the case of perfect equality, and the value 100 in the case of maximum inequality. In 2010, it had a value of 33.5, increasing with fluctuations to 34.7 in 2014. Since then, it has progressively decreased to 33.0 in 2019; two tenths less than the previous year. Therefore, this index also shows a decrease in income inequality.

On the other hand, for *levels of welfare benefit receipt*, the latest year for which data are available is 2017. In this year, the total number of users of social services was 5,442,313.

In 2010, the total number of users attended by Social Services Centres was 6,930,978; since then, there has been a progressive decrease, eventually reaching 5,298,350 users in 2015. From this year onwards, the trend has been reversed, with a further annual increase to 5,435,428 users by 2017, with the Information and Guidance service being the one which has served the most users.

The number of users in the hostels in 2010 was 13,209, decreasing progressively with ups and downs to reach 5,511 users in 2017. Something similar happens with the Reception Centres, in 2010 the number of users was 2,112, decreasing progressively, although with fluctuations, until reaching its minimum in 2016 with 1,005 users and rebounding in 2017 to 1,374 users.

*(vi) Housing problems;*

In 2010, the overcrowding rate was 5%. It rose to 6.6% in 2011, and since then it has decreased to 4.7% in 2018 (Table 14). As for the housing cost overburden rate, it was 9.7% in 2010 and increased to 1.9% in 2014. Since then, it declined to 8.9% in 2018 (Table 15).

In relation to people under 18 years, overcrowding rate was 7.5% in 2010. From then until 2016 it increased slightly and went down to 8.4% in 2018 (Table 14). As regarding the housing cost overburden rate, it stood at 13.5% in 2010 and remained virtually unchanged since 2016, when it declined by 3.1%, from 14 % to 10.9% (Table 15).

In conclusion, in both groups, the percentage of housing problems was reduced between 2010 and 2018.

Table 14. *Overcrowding rate (OCR)*

Year	OCR%	
	Children less than 18 years	Total
2010	7.5	5.0
2015	8.2	5.5
2016	8.4	5.4
2017	8.2	5.1
2018	8.4	4.7

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

Table 15 shows the housing cost overburden rate for Spain.

Table 15. *Housing cost over burden rate*

Year	Children less than 18 years (%)	Total (%)
2010	13.5	9.7
2015	14.0	10.3

2016	14.0	10.2
2017	13.4	9.8
2018	10.9	8.9
2019	N/A	N/A

Note. Eurostat Database (2020).

*Summary: The broader socio-economic context and trends which influences children's, parental and family circumstances and environments:*

From 2010 to 2018, the fertility rate decreased gradually, and the number of large families was reduced. This means that there are more elder people than younger people. In contrast, the percentage of the population over working age has grown substantially, reaching 19.7% in 2019.

With regard to migration patterns, immigration has increased significantly over the years in relation to all geopolitical entities. Immigrants in Spain come mainly from Morocco, Romania, and Ecuador, who are the main ethnic vulnerable minorities. In contrast, emigration patterns dropped over the years.

The diversity of family structures has increased (e.g., lone parents, stepfamilies, same-sex couple, common-law partner). In this way, a high percentage of children are in foster care. In foster care families, there are more girls than boys, and more Spanish than foreigners. In residential care, this trend is reversed. Therefore, foreign boys under 18 were a vulnerable group.

Finally, employment disadvantage is wide in Spain. In general, poverty rates in 2018 was slightly higher than 2010. More males than females, more Spanish than foreigners, and more adults than youth have always been employed.

Nevertheless, support for families and children is scarce and not very varied. Families have difficulties accessing any kind of help. In addition, although Spain has inequality distribution in income, Social Services tried equality for levels of welfare benefit receipt.

**25.4 The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions and actors' which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision:**

(i) *Membership to the EU: YES*

(ii) *Relationship with European Union*

The arrival of democracy paved Spain's way towards Europe. Spain was officially integrated into the EEC on January 1, 1986. Since then, Spain has seen huge economic, social, and political transformations, among other reasons due to the major impact of cohesion and structural funds, which jump-started the development of Spanish regions. In June 1991, Spain signed the Schengen agreement by which, initially, eight countries eliminated controls at internal borders; the "Europe without Borders" that entered into force in March 1995, and to which almost all the States gradually joined as members. Therefore, the EU is the natural framework for the political and economic development of Spain. The Council of Europe and EU regulations have also provided the framework that shape the goals, substance, and delivery of family support policy and provision.

(iii) *Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy*

National, Regional and Local agencies approved at their respective levels the regulation to be followed for the family policy, family support, and social policy. All of them have been inspired by the positive parenting framework emanating from the Council of Europe's Recommendation 19 (2006) of the Committee of Ministers of the Member States, which provides guidance on how governments can support positive parenting. This Recommendation endorses the importance of children growing up in a positive family environment and emphasizes the responsibility of the state to create the best conditions for this by providing parents with sufficient and adequate support.

(iv) *Influential lobbying groups,*

No data

(v) *Influential policy/research networks; (Name them if available)*

Since 2009, a partnership was created that brings together the Spanish Ministry of Health, Social Services, and Equality; the State Federation of Towns and Provinces (FEMP in Spanish); and a consortium of seven Spanish Universities (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Universidad de La Laguna, Universidad de Lleida, Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Universidad de Sevilla, Universidad del País Vasco, and Universidad de Oviedo). First, to disseminate the positive parenting framework among professionals working in child and family services. Second, the *Guide of Best Practices in Positive Parenting (Guía de Buenas prácticas en Parentalidad positiva)*, meant as a resource to support professional practice with families

(www.familiasenpositivo.org) enhancing the innovative and quality assurance processes by means of changes to the organizational cultures and professional practices.

*(vi) The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support (not more than 10 lines)*

The form of government in Spain is a parliamentary monarchy, that is, a democratic constitutional monarchy in which the monarch is the head of state, while the prime minister—whose official title is "President of the Government"—is the head of government. Executive power is exercised by the Government, which is integrated by the Prime Minister, the deputy prime ministers and other ministers, which collectively form the Cabinet, or Council of Ministers. Legislative power is vested in the Cortes Generales (General Courts), a bicameral parliament constituted by the Congress of Deputies and the Senate. The judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature, administering justice on behalf of the King by judges and magistrates. The Supreme Court of Spain is the highest court in the nation, with jurisdiction in all Spanish territories, superior to all in all affairs except constitutional matters, which are the jurisdiction of a separate court, the Constitutional Court.

*(vii) The democratic system and main political parties; unitary vs federal state structures; centralised vs decentralised structures) (not more than 10 lines)*

Spain's political system is a multi-party system, but since the 1990s two parties have been predominant in politics, the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and the People's Party (PP) until very recently with the arrival of other federal parties such as Ciudadanos (CS), Unidas Podemos (UP) and Vox. Regional parties, mainly the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) and Bildu, from the Basque Country, and Junts per Catalunya (JxCat), the Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC), and Candidatura d' Unitat Popular (CUP) from Catalonia, have also played key roles in Spanish politics. Members of the Congress of Deputies are selected through proportional representation, and the government is formed by the party or coalition that has the confidence of the Congress.

*(viii) The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular (e.g. Ministry roles, national vs local/regional government roles); (not more than 10lines)*

A common scheme has been followed in the way family support is delivered in Spain through three levels of responsibility. The development of parental support policies is generally the responsibility of the central government. The central authorities are responsible for the legislative framework and regulations, the drafting of national action plans, and part of the financial support. In turn, the governments of the Autonomous Communities (Spain is made up

of seventeen Autonomous Communities, and the Autonomous Cities of Ceuta and Melilla situated in the north of Africa) are responsible for specific legislative regulations, co-funding, and the general organization of services within their territories. The implementation of the programs through the provision of parenting support activities is, in most cases, a responsibility of the local administrations, involving public and private agencies and organizations from the voluntary sector, with different degrees of coordination and funding.

*(ix) The ways in and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policymaking and reviews;*

The professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are well articulated in associations (e.g., NGO) that can express their opinions and raises their voices to question the political decisions and to demand services that fulfil their needs. The national strategic plans have fully implemented the enrolment of stakeholders in their design and implementation, and have been welcomed as important developments to give voice to children and their families.

### **25.5 List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year 2000. For each policy document indicate**

*(a) Whether participation of families and young people has been mentioned in the document*

Given the organization of competencies in family support in Spain, there are general strategic plans at national level and specific plans by region. The national plans developed since 2000 are described first, followed by the specific plans currently in force in various regions of the country.

- *I National Strategic Plan for Childhood and Adolescence (2006–10)* (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2006). The aim of this plan is to promote at national level the well-being of children and adolescents, taking into consideration their needs and interests in order to increase their quality of life, and foster the full development of their capabilities as active subjects of their rights. The promotion of participation of families and young people is mentioned in the document.
- *II National Strategic Plan for Childhood and Adolescence (2013–16)* (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2013). Approved in April 2013, it is a continuation of the previous plan. Its aims are to promote the well-being of children and adolescents, taking into consideration their needs and interests in order to increase their quality of life, and foster the full development of their capabilities as active subjects of their rights. The promotion of participation of families and young people is also taken up in this Plan.

- III National Strategic Plan for Childhood and Adolescence (currently in draft form).
- Comprehensive Plan for Family Support (2015–17) (Government of Spain, 2015) was approved in April 2015, with the aim of structuring a family policy covering health, education, and justice aspects, among others, with impact on family policies. In particular, one of the strategies involves a set of measures with developments in reconciliation and joint responsibility for personal, family, and working life, in reinforcement of the intergenerational solidarity, and in improvement of the parental competences to promote positive parenting.
- National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (2013–16) (Ministry of Health, Consumption and Social Welfare (2013a), approved in December 2013, aims to provide a response to needs related to poverty and social exclusion, all under the framework of the EU targets set out in the Europe 2020 Strategy. Specifically, the fight against child poverty relies on the following three points: (a) access to suitable resources and home support, which involves supporting parents' participation in the labour market, allowing for greater work, family, and personal life balance, as well as providing suitable income in harmony with social benefits; (b) access to quality services, which means investing in early childhood education and care to reduce inequalities, and in the development of educational systems that make an impact on equal opportunities; preventing health inequality through early intervention; providing suitable housing and a risk-free environment; and fostering social services that protect children and support their parents; and (c) child participation, with suggestions to support the inclusion of children in social, cultural, leisure, and civic activities, as well as establishing mechanisms to ensure their implication in decisions that affect their lives.
- Prevention and Health Promotion Strategy of the National Health System (Ministry of Health, Consumption and Social Welfare (2013b), approved in December 2013, aimed at health promotion and universal prevention of major risk of illness at all stages of life, with a special focus on promoting healthy lifestyles during pregnancy, children's emotional well-being in the first three years of life, and healthy and active lifestyles in the ageing population.

The current regional plans are described below (Government of Spain, n.d.):

- II Andalusian Childhood and Adolescence Plan (2016-20). It is a plan that expressly includes family support policies to ensure the well-being of children and adolescents.
- Family Support Strategy of the Community of Madrid (2016-21). A specific plan of family support that includes the strategies currently implemented in this region.

- *Integral Plan for Families, Children and Adolescents in Extremadura* (2017-20). A comprehensive plan that integrates the strategies of attention both to the family and to children and adolescents.
- *Childhood and Family Plan of Castilla-La Mancha* (2018-21). This plan integrates the strategies of attention both to the family and to children in this region.
- *Integral Plan for Children of Asturias* (2013-2016). This comprehensive plan adopts the rights perspective provided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which implies that each of the actions it includes must be applied in a holistic manner, taking into account the principles of universality, indivisibility, and interdependence of all rights.
- *IV Plan for Children and Adolescents of La Rioja* (2018-2021). It is a plan with a human rights-based approach that establishes the strategies for this region in the area of children and adolescents.
- *II Integral Plan for the Support of the Family, Children and Adolescents in the Community of Navarra* (2017-2023). It is a comprehensive plan that integrates the strategies of attention both to the family and to children and adolescents in this region.
- *Canarian Strategy for Childhood, Adolescence, and the Family* (2019-2023). It is a comprehensive plan that integrates the strategies of attention, both to the family and to children and adolescents in this region.
- *II Emergency Social Plan of Cantabria* (2018 – 2020). This document presents the strategies that the government of this region is currently applying to meet the social needs of the population, including those related to children and families.
- *II Integral Plan for Childhood and Adolescence in Aragon*. Approved in 2010, it is a comprehensive plan that integrates the strategies of attention, both to the family and to children and adolescents in this region.
- *Integral Plan for Children and Adolescents in Catalonia*. Approved in 2010, it is a plan that establishes the strategies for this region in the area of children and adolescents.
- *Galician Strategic Plan for Children and Adolescents*. Approved in 2007, Galicia has subsequently decided to adopt the II National Strategic Plan for Childhood and Adolescence as its own.
- *II Family and Childhood Integral Plan of the Valencian Community*. Approved in 2007, this plan includes, in a single document, the various actions for the promotion, protection, and assistance to the family and children carried out by the Valencian Government.

- *IV Inter-institutional Support Plan for Families in the Basque Country* (2018 - 2022). This comprehensive plan develops the strategic lines of support for the family from the different institutions.
- *I Family Promotion Plan of Murcia*. Approved in 2006, Murcia has subsequently decided to adopt the II National Strategic Plan for Childhood and Adolescence as its own.
- *Social Services Strategic Plan of Castilla-León* (2017-2021). This Strategic Plan includes the strategic lines of attention to the families of this region, and is the result of an important process of social participation.

*(b) The extent to which such participation has been implemented*

All the aforementioned national and regional strategic plans have fully implemented the enrolment of stakeholders (e.g., the Platform of Childhood Organizations, Cáritas Española, the Spanish branch of SOS Children's Villages, the Federation of Associations to Prevent Child Abuse, the Spanish Red Cross, and UNICEF Spain) in their design and implementation, and have been welcomed as important developments to give voice to children and their families.

**25.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services:**

*(i) The priorities in child welfare and family policy*

Family support policies today address a wide variety of issues which are dealt from different departments, e.g., in relation to housing (promoting easier access to ownership), the labour market (reducing temporary employment), old age (offering more public support for the elderly), and gender equality (seen, for instance, in measures promoting the presence of women in the workplace, the balance between work and family life, and parental leave). Importantly, family policy also focused on child and family wellbeing, inspired by the Council of Europe's positive parenting framework, already mentioned. The impact of this European initiative has also led to a clear recognition in Spain of the importance of adopting a prevention focus for family intervention, as well as the need to strengthen parental capacities and empower communities, along with the adoption of codes of professional best practices to improve prevention work with families.

*(ii) The main types of family provision and support and key features (e.g., different types of cash support (universal and targeted), work-family reconciliation measures and children's/family services, childcare etc)*

In the last two decades, Spain has moved from a deficit and targeted perspective on family's needs to a preservation model focused on supporting and strengthening families and communities (Jiménez et al, 2019). From 2001, a National Comprehensive Family Support Plan was agreed and implemented. It was a comprehensive strategy to promote a coherent approach across national and regional governments, promoting the family 'as a social asset' and a common national policy approach. The second edition of the Plan has been carried out since 2015, and aimed seeking to develop more comprehensive and coherent economic and social support for children and families. Service-based developments were orientated towards achieving four national goals: support for motherhood, promoting positive parenting, support for families with special needs, and enhanced service coordination and evaluations. Additional national plans addressing social exclusion, domestic violence, social equality, and health promotion were also funded. Furthermore, as part of these plans positive parenting policies have become a priority strategy in family support at the national and regional levels (Churchill et al, 2020).

In the *child protection system*, support to parents has been mainly developed with the aim of preventing and treating child maltreatment in vulnerable families by providing assistance for improving the family life conditions and enhancing parental skills. Progressively, the services' exclusive focus on child protection/child safety issues has changed to also include general concerns about parenting issues and family wellbeing under a family diversity focus. Thus, support is also provided via *family preservation services* located in basic and specialized municipal social services to avoid the unnecessary displacement of children at risk to institutionalized care. Spain is specially committed to provide support to vulnerable families in the context of psycho-educational and community-based interventions, involving at risk and non-at-risk parents and with a more preventive and strengthening focus. Accordingly, the so-called "progressive universalism" – support for all, with more support for those who need it most – has been considered as the most suitable method of intervention.

There is also a growing emphasis on the new model of professional training and family intervention on the use of evidence-based parent / child education programs. The incorporation of evidence-based parent education programs into the local family services has several advantages. First, it contributes to change the focus of intervention from the therapeutic-clinical sphere, characterized by an exclusive individual approach to support families, to the psychosocial-educational and community sphere, with an emphasis on prevention and strengthening capacities in the family and developing communities. Secondly, the implementation of these programs improves the professionals' skills, as they should learn how to integrate the program into their casework with families, and how to run those interventions. Finally, the quality of the services themselves is improved, since programs are evaluated

according to standards of quality assurance, achieving a better coordination of the services and resources in the community.

Finally, the child and family support services have three common features that characterize the prevention focus in Spanish service provision to families: (a) the families targeted come from a broad variety of situations with different levels of parental needs and requiring a continuum of support measures; (b) there is a trend to reinforce community and specialized services to support families at the local level; and (c) there is a clear recognition of the importance of promoting intersectoral (social, education, health, and justice) work and introducing the positive parenting framework into prevention efforts in each area.

Table 14. *Examples of child and family support services and programs in the municipal services in Spain*

Services	Programs
Family mediation and meeting points	Workshops to promote co-parenting and co-responsibility in the organization of family life
Day care centres and associations for children and adolescents	Out-of-school educational activities to promote children's positive development
Sports and leisure centres	Leisure and recreation programs to promote healthy lifestyles in the family
Civic centres	Community programs to promote family-school-neighbour collaboration
Youth centres	Out-of-school/street education for young people from vulnerable families at psychosocial risk

*(iii) The types of funding involved such as state, charity vs private sector providers and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners*

Most of the programmes received public financial support for their development, implementation, and evaluation. In some cases, it has been possible to obtain funding from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or from banking foundation. This financial support

ensures rigorous evaluation and sustained support for the large-scale implementation of the programs. Professionals working in the public or private services are well trained by the program's staff in the program principles and content, group management, and the implementation and evaluation of the program. Finally, quality assurance and program fidelity are enhanced by training workshops, site visits by the program's staff, and online supervision.

*(iv) Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations*

There is a need for improving policy monitoring and evaluation. Concerning policy monitoring, orchestrated planning usually involves the use of indicators, responsible agents, measures, and timing to monitor to what extent the aims put forward have been fulfilled. This is the case for most of the planning for childhood, adolescence, and family support developed at the national (e.g., Strategy for Health Promotion and Prevention in the National Health System [Estrategia de Promoción de la Salud y Prevención en el Sistema Nacional de Salud]), regional (e.g., IV Inter-institutional Family Support Plan [IV Plan Interinstitucional de apoyo a las familias] from the Vasque Country) and local levels (Tenerife Island Plan for Child and Family Care [Plan Insular de Atención al Menor y la Familia de Tenerife]). However, little evaluation work is made to monitor the progress and to propose measures that allow for on-going improvements and better outcomes.

Concerning the evaluation of child and family services, although decision-makers are increasingly selecting programmes supported by extensive research evidence, and there is increasing use of evidence-based programmes, there is still little concern about the quality standards and little orientation towards evaluating the professionals' work. However, as a result of the implementation of the *Guide of Best Practices in Positive Parenting (Guía de Buenas prácticas en Parentalidad positiva)*, the standards for best practices have been elaborated with the consensus of the professionals. Many services are implementing a process of self-evaluation and planning improvements that receive official recognition from the national authorities. It is good news to see quality assurance in the provision of services increasingly being placed at the forefront of efforts by policymakers, researchers, and professionals to deliver the best evidence-based practices aimed at supporting parents.

*(v) Limitations in national and official data and statistics*

Spain relies on European and national data and statistics to draw a picture of the current situation in the field. However, issues such as family diversity, child functional diversity, child and adolescent outcomes, impact of migration on family, are some of the issues, among others, still underrepresented in the statistics. Comparatives studies on child and family matters across Europe are also seldom performed and quite biased.

## **25.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision. What are the prominent policy and practice developments related to family support services from children's rights, social equality, and evidence-informed perspectives?**

### *(i) What are the pressing policy, practice and research challenges impeding developments?*

Spain is a modern European country with a long cultural tradition of strong family bonds, high endorsement of family values, and a great investment by the family in supporting children and dependent members. Notably, these views have strongly supported the Spanish people moving firmly toward adopting a modern view of the family, as revealed in their attitudes of respect for family diversity, the promotion of more horizontal parent–child relationships, the observance of children's rights, the achievement of more gender equality and firm opposition to any form of gender violence. In the context of recent policy developments, the national strategic plans currently undertaken to promote child and family wellbeing represent a new line of family policies, underscoring the important role that positive parenting plays as a protective factor for child development, and recognizing the need to provide more preventive and integrated support to families. The establishment of a framework for collaboration among policymakers, researchers, and professionals is an important achievement. Multiple agents coming from previously disconnected areas have raised their voices in favour of the promotion of universal, selective, and indicated prevention actions in the domain of child and family services. The existing network of basic and specialized municipal social services in Spain offers a promising launch pad for family-based prevention initiatives. Well-trained, motivated professionals working in multidisciplinary teams are the force that will guarantee positive results for these initiatives. Spain is also fortunate to have a robust network of NGOs and volunteer movements providing support to families facing adverse circumstances or with special needs.

At national level, the public investment in family issues is still lower as compared to the average investment in other developed European countries. Family-work conciliation measures, though are supported by law, require additional efforts to be fully implemented in the society. Budget cuts applied in many services in time of crisis have the potential to weaken the prevention network and jeopardize program sustainability. In addition, there is another problem since, although structures exist to provide support to families, policies and services depend largely on the parties in power at any given time. Thus, the challenge is to articulate a bottom-up model that minimizes those effects, provides stability, and enables inductive policies and practices.

Another source of concern is the fact that there is still a weak evaluative culture in the child and family services in Spain. There is a need to better identify the Spanish parenting programmes that work in different autonomic regions. In this regard, it is also important to

identify the competences required to work with families under this prevention framework, for training purposes. Finally, the family's perspective should be incorporated into the services' quality-assurance process.

*(ii) What are the pressing gaps in provision?*

Additional efforts must be made to build on the initial merging of positive parenting initiatives into the child protection system by incorporating the evidence-based perspective. In turn, the focus on prevention activities to promote positive parenting and local community development has not (yet) been uniformly adopted in municipal social services across Spain. For instance, there are still some services oriented solely at supporting high-need families, with the result being that multi-assisted families are targeted while the wider communities remain under-resourced and underserved. Among other measures, it is important to guarantee the sustainability of evidence-based programmes as a prevention resource for family intervention at the local level. There must be sustained efforts to continue introducing and adapting the evidence-based approach in the child and family services since the preventive network is quite fragile. A key element for promoting these programs' sustainability is to demonstrate that the incorporation of evidence-based programs not only produces positive changes in child and family wellbeing but also leads to positive changes in professionals' work with families and contributes to the better organization of the service.

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## 26 SWEDEN – National report on family support policy & provision

**Terese Glatz & Metin Özdemir**

### 26.1 Trends and issues related to demography

*(i) Fertility rates*

Table 1. *Fertility rates*

Year	Fertility rate
2010	1.98
2015	1.85
2016	1.85
2017	1.78
2018	1.75
2019	1.70

*(ii) Families with children by number of children*

Table 2. *Families with children by number of children (0-17 years).*

0-17 years	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
1	472 094	475 794	480 073	484 864	488 506
2	482 034	491 863	500 520	508 409	515 536
3	137 868	142 831	146 825	150 006	151 952
4	27 150	28 810	30 393	31 365	31 783
5	6 687	7 302	7 809	8 040	8 329
6	2 254	2 473	2 675	2 788	2 800
7	894	928	957	1 042	1 078
8	352	393	445	421	388
9	147	158	152	151	123
10+	95	86	74	86	88

*(iii) Percentage of the population aged 0-19*

Table 3. *Percentage of the population aged 0-18*

Year	%
2010	20.4
2015	20.6
2016	20.8
2017	21.0
2018	21.1
2019	21.1

*(iv) Percentage of population over working (retiring) age*

Table 4. *Percentage of population over working (retiring) age*

Year	%
2010	18.1
2015	19.6
2016	19.8
2017	19.8
2018	19.8
2019	19.9

*(v) Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities*

Table 5. *Percentage of foreign born as part of population*

Year	%
2010	14.7
2015	17.0
2016	17.9
2017	18.5
2018	19.1
2019	19.6

*(vi) Migration patterns*

Table 6. *Number of immigrants*

Year	n
2010	98 801
2015	134240
2016	163005
2017	144489
2018	132602
2019	115805

Table 7. *Number of emigrants*

Year	n
2010	48 853
2015	55 830
2016	45 878
2017	45 620
2018	46 981
2019	47 718

## 26.2 Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles and children's living arrangements

### (i) *Family household types*

Table 8. *Families with children 0-17 years by type of household, 2019*

Family household type	(n)
Nuclear families	838 612
Single mother	193 251
Single father	60 403
Reconstructed families	103 639
Other families	4 678
Total	1 200 583

*(ii) Marriage and divorce rates*

Table 9. *Number of marriages*

Year	(n)
2010	56 555
2015	52 314
2016	53 817
2017	52 497
2018	50 796
2019	48 481

Table 10. *Number of divorces*

Year	(n)
2010	25 151
2015	24 876
2016	24 258
2017	24 210
2018	24 958
2019	25 408

*(iii) Lone-parent families*

Table 11. *Children aged 0-17 living at home with single mothers*

Year	(n)
2015	289991
2016	296936
2017	303505
2018	308236

Table 12. *Children aged 0-17 living at home with single fathers*

Year	(n)
2015	72 043
2016	75 753
2017	80 526
2018	85 646

*(iv) Children and youth living in institutions*

Table 13. *Children and youth living in institutions*

Year	(n)
2015	10 391
2016	11 723

2017      12 358

2018      12 023

## 26.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare

### (i) Poverty rates

Table 14. *At risk of poverty*

Year	%
2010	9.8
2015	7.9
2016	8.1
2017	7.9
2018	7.7

Table 15. *Employment/unemployment rates*

Year	%
2010	8.6
2015	7.4
2016	7.0
2017	6.7

2018	6.4
2019	6.8

Table 16. *Unemployment by gender (female)*

Year	%
2010	8.5
2015	7.3
2016	6.6
2017	6.4
2018	6.2
2019	7.0

Table 17. *Unemployment by gender (male)*

Year	%
2010	8.7
2015	7.6
2016	7.4
2017	7.0
2018	6.5
2019	6.7

Table 18. *Youth unemployment (aged 15-24, neither employment nor in education or training)*

Year	%
2010	7.7
2015	6.7
2016	6.5
2017	6.1
2018	6.0
2019	6.0

*Differences in employment ratio according to migration and parent migration status in year 2014*

The total employment ratio in 2014 was 43,5 %. Native-born with native background had an employment ratio of 46,7% whilst native-born with mixed background and foreign background (second generation of immigrant) had 37,2% employment ratio and foreign-born (first generation of immigrants) had 31,2 % employment ratio.

Table 19. *Percentage of completed tertiary education by reporting country-born*

Year	%
2010	32.4
2015	40.2
2016	41.5
2017	42.2

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2018	44.0
2019	45.6

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Table 20. *Percentage of completed tertiary education by foreign country-born*

Year	%
2010	32.9
2015	39.9
2016	41.2
2017	41.3
2018	41.0
2019	40.9

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Table 21. *Percentage of completed upper-secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education by reporting country-born*

Year	%
2010	49.0
2015	48.3
2016	47.8
2017	47.4
2018	46.5

2019      46.1

Table 22. *Percentage of completed upper-secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education by foreign country-born*

Year	%
2010	35.7
2015	29.5
2016	28.5
2017	27.4
2018	26.7
2019	26.8

Table 23. *Mortality risk per 1000 at age 60 sorted by born in Sweden*

Year	%
2015	5.24
2016	5.43
2017	5.11
2018	5.05
2019	4.93

Table 24. *Mortality risk per 1000 at age 60 sorted by born abroad*

Year	%
2015	7.21
2016	5.29
2017	5.11
2018	5.78
2019	4.25

*(ii) Housing problems*

Table 25. *Overcrowding rate by reporting country-born*

Year	%
2010	16.4
2015	17.0
2016	16.4
2017	15.3
2018	16.7

Table 26. *Overcrowding rate by foreign country-born*

Year	%
2010	32.1
2015	37.3
2016	42.7
2017	32.5
2018	40.9

Table 27. *Housing cost overburden rate, total percentage of population*

Year	%
2010	7.8
2015	8.7
2016	8.5
2017	8.4
2018	8.3

Table 28. *Housing cost overburden rate, reporting country-born*

Year	%
2010	7.8
2015	8.1

2016	8.1
2017	7.5
2018	7.7

Table 29. *Housing cost overburden rate, foreign country-born*

Year	%
2010	12.1
2015	15.0
2016	14.1
2017	15.5
2018	15.0

## 26.4 The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions, and actors' which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision

(i) *Membership to the EU; YES*

(ii) *Relationship with European Union (not more than 10 lines)*

Sweden has been a member of the European Union since 1995, however the country has not joined the Euro zone following a national referendum.

(iii) *Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy*

In Sweden, there is no single agency that governs all policies and practices regarding family support services. Several governmental and nongovernmental agencies play a role in different aspects of the family services. The key organizations are:

1. National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen): <https://www.socialstyrelsen.se>
2. Public Health Agency of Sweden (Folkhälsomyndigheten): <https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se>
3. Save the Children (Rädda barnen): <https://www.raddabarnen.se/>
4. Family Law and Parental Support Authority (MFoF): <https://www.mfof.se>
5. Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF): <https://www.mucl.se>
6. Children's Rights in Society (BRIS): <https://www.bris.se/>
7. Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå): <https://www.bra.se>

There is a Barnombudsman [Ombudsman for children], who is responsible for children's rights and interests and who follows the UN convention of the rights of children. There is also a Barn- och elevombudsman [Ombudsman for children in school], who protects children's rights in relation to what is written in the law of school. In Sweden, there is also a Diskrimineringsombudsman [Equality ombudsman] who makes sure people are following the law against discrimination (regeringen.se).

*(iv) Influential lobbying groups*

The organizations listed above are responsible for various practices, including identifying needs, developing reports, keeping and distributing national statistics, funding or motivating research, and developing policy recommendations. Thus, these organizations also lobby for the development of national policies, as well as new or continued funding of support services for children, youth, parents, and families. There are some non-profit groups that work for the rights and support of families and children. Examples are Allmänna barnhuset (supports socially exposed children), Children's rights in the society, Child foundation, Unicef, Plansverige, and Save the children.

Many lobbying groups have direct contact with politicians to influence Swedish politics. In general, lobbying groups have gained more importance in politics in Sweden during the last 20-30 years (Lundberg, 2015). Specifically, the lobbying groups work to change attitudes and the formation of opinions in society.

*(v) Influential policy/research networks;*

The response above (4.iv.) also applies here. Universities in Sweden focus on family issues. Stockholm University has a department of child and youth studies, while other universities have research groups with a specific focus on children and or families, such as "Tema barn"

(Linköpings University), CHILD (Jönköping University), BUR (Örebro university), Barn och barndomar (Gothenburg university).

*(vi) The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support*

The political system prioritizes welfare of its citizens with a heavy emphasis on the role of the state in providing the needs of all people (Lundberg & Åmark, 2001). Thus, governments aim to ensure that people in need have access to basic standards of living, health services, and a free and high-quality education.

*(vii) The democratic system and main political parties; unitary vs federal state structures; centralised vs decentralised structures)*

Sweden has a hybrid system. In addition to centralized rules, regulations, and services, local governments (e.g., municipalities) are also responsible for providing services or funding services. Services could be provided by local or national public agencies, commissioned organization, or non-profit public service organizations. During the last decades, Sweden has become more decentralized; one example being the Swedish school (Nordin, 2014).

There are eight political parties in Sweden:

- Centerpartiet (C) - Centre
- Kristdemokraterna (KD) – Right
- Liberalerna (L) - Centre
- Miljöpartiet de gröna (MP) – Centre-left
- Moderata samlingspartiet (M) – Right
- Socialdemokraterna (S) – Centre-left
- Sverigedemokraterna (SD) – Right
- Vänsterpartiet (V) – Left to far-left

*(viii) The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular (e.g., Ministry roles, national vs local/regional government roles);*

Ministries have the role of regulating and overseeing services. The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Research are two of the most relevant ministries that are responsible for the well-being of children and families. Although they are centrally regulated,

local governments are responsible for providing and regulating, to some extent, the services such as health, education, and social services. These services are provided following the recommendations and regulations developed and distributed by independent agencies, such as the National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen), Public Health Agency (Folkhälsomyndigheten), and The National Agency of Education (Skolverket).

*(ix) The ways in and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policymaking and reviews; (not more than 10 lines)*

Public agencies in Sweden value the participation of citizens in the decision-making process in various ways. County councils at local level are the key institutions that enable and promote citizen participation. Information sharing, dialogue, consultation, and co-decision making are some examples that aim to promote participation of citizens in the governing process.

## **26.5 List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year 2000. For each policy document indicate**

*(a) Whether participation of families and young people has been mentioned in the document*

We used the government database to find documents that have been published between the years 2000 and 2021 (<https://www.regeringen.se/dokument-och-publikationer/>). We used the following pre-decided search criteria:

- Type of document: Artikel (Article); Rapport (Report); Proposition (Proposition); Skrivelse (Written communication); Statens offentliga utredningar (Official Reports of the Swedish Government).
- Content: Barnets rättigheter (Children's rights); Familjerätt (Family right); Ungdomspolitik (Youth politics).

From this search, we received **89 publications**. Documents not directly related to family and/or young people, or mainly concerned with criminal law or specific legislative changes, were excluded. Furthermore, **35** documents were identified as dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents. Of these, **26** mentioned and/or described participation of families and/or young people (Table below).

Document	Participation specifically mentioned
SOU 2020:63 - Barnkonventionen och svensk rätt [Governmental report on the UN Convention on the rights of the child and Swedish law]	Yes, indirectly
Prop. 2017/18 - Inkorporering av FN:s konvention om barnets rättigheter [Proposition to incorporate the UN Convention on the rights of the child into Swedish law]	Yes
SOU 2017:112 - Ett fönster av möjligheter - stärkt barnrättsperspektiv för barn i skyddat boende [Governmental report on strengthening the children's rights perspective in sheltered housing]	Yes, thoroughly
Slutrapport (2017) - Barnets och ungdomens reform - förslag för en hållbar framtid [Final report concerning child welfare reforms]	Yes, thoroughly
SOU 2019:32 - Straffrättsligt skydd för barn som bevittnar brott mellan närstående samt mot uppmaning och annan psykisk påverkan att begå självmord [Governmental report on criminal law protection for children who witness crime between relatives, as well as encouragement for suicide]	Yes, thoroughly
SOU 2018:11 - Vårt gemensamma ansvar - för unga som varken arbetar eller studerar [Governmental report on how to support young people's establishment in society]	Yes
SOU 2017:9 - Det handlar om oss - unga som varken arbetar eller studerar [Governmental report on how to support young people's establishment in society]	Yes
SOU 2017:111 - För barnets bästa? Utredningen om tvångsåtgärder mot barn i psykiatrisk tvångsvård [Governmental report on compulsory measures used against children in psychiatric involuntary commitment]	Yes

<p>SOU 2017:101 - Jämställt föräldraskap och goda uppväxtvillkor för barn - en ny modell för föräldraförsäkringen [Governmental report on a new model for parental insurance which will increase equal parenting and enhance beneficial conditions for children]</p>	<p>Yes, indirectly</p>
<p>SOU 2017:68 - Barnets rättigheter i ett straffrättsligt förfarande m.m. Genomförande av EU:s barnrättsdirektiv och två andra straffprocessuella frågor [Governmental report on children's rights in criminal proceedings]</p>	<p>Yes, indirectly</p>
<p>SOU 2017:6 - Se barnet! [Governmental report which examines whether the child rights perspective has been strengthened by the custody reform from 2006]</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Skr. 2015/16 - Handlingsplan 2016-2018 till skydd för barn mot människohandel, exploatering och sexuella övergrepp [Governmental report on strategies to protect and support children from human trafficking, exploitation, and sexual abuse]</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>SOU 2016:19 - Barnkonventionen blir svensk lag [Governmental report on the UN Convention on the rights of the child becoming Swedish law]</p>	<p>Yes, indirectly</p>
<p>Skr. 2015/16:86 - En samlad strategi för alkohol-, narkotika-, dopnings- och tobakspolitiken 2016-2020 [Governmental report on a collective strategy for alcohol, narcotics, doping and tobacco politics]</p>	<p>Yes, indirectly</p>
<p>Prop. 2015/16:43 - Stödboende - en ny placeringsform för barn och unga [Proposition on a new form of placement in the Social Services Act for children and young people aged 16-20]</p>	<p>Yes, indirectly</p>
<p>Prop. 2014/15:43 - Utbildning för elever i samhällsvård och på sjukhus [Proposition on how to ensure education for students staying at care homes or hospitals]</p>	<p>Yes, indirectly</p>
<p>SOU 2016:77 - En gymnasieutbildning för alla – åtgärder för att alla unga ska påbörja och fullfölja en gymnasieutbildning [Governmental report on</p>	<p>Yes, thoroughly</p>

measures to ensure that all young people begin and complete a high school education]

SOU 2015:71 - Barns och ungas rätt vid tvångsvård Förslag till ny LVU.  
[Governmental report on how to strengthen children's rights in compulsory treatment]

Yes, thoroughly

SOU 2008:59 - Föreningsfostran och tävlingsfostran - en utvärdering av statens stöd till idrotten [Governmental report on the governmental support of sports movements for children and youths]

Yes

SOU 2014:49 - Våld i nära relationer - en folkhälsofråga [Governmental report on advised legislation and strategies to further prevent violence in close relations]

Yes

Prop. 2009/10 - Åtgärder mot familjeseparation inom migrationsområdet  
[Proposition on legal changes to prevent migrant family separation]

Yes, indirectly

Skr. 2013/14:91 - Åtgärder för att stärka barnets rättigheter och uppväxtvillkor i Sverige [Governmental report on strategies to strengthen children's rights and upbringing conditions in Sweden]

Yes, indirectly

SOU 2006:45 - Tänka framåt, men göra nu - Så stärker vi barnkulturen  
[Governmental report on how to strengthen children's cultural life]

Yes

SOU 2012:35 - Stärkt skydd mot tvångsäktenskap och barnäktenskap  
[Governmental report on strengthen security against forced marriage and child marriage]

Yes, indirectly

Prop. 2009/10:192 - Umgängesstöd och socialtjänstens förutsättningar att tala med barn [Proposition on social support and the social services possibility to talk with children]

Yes, indirectly

SOU 2006:37 - Om välfärdens gränser och det villkorade medborgarskapet  
[Governmental report on inquiry into power, intersectionality and structural  
discrimination]

Yes

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*Note.* Yes, indirectly: Indirect participation through organizations and agencies working for the interests of children and/or parents, or by the use of statistical data or surveys of the interest of children or parents collected outside the project. Yes: Parents or children have been consulted on the topic in question. Yes, thoroughly: High participation of parents and/or children and their perspectives are thoroughly described and much emphasized.

In review of these above-listed documents, the focus was identifying the degree of participation of parents and/or youths, in forming suggestions, policies and strategies.

Overall, there was a strong emphasis on children's right to express their view in matters concerning them, and many referred to Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as relevant Swedish legislation such as the Care of Young Persons (special provisions) Act and the Social Services Act. During the last decade there has been a strengthened child perspective in the legislation. For instance, there has been increasing emphasis on the child's right to information, and that their own will and opinion should be considered. Several documents also highlight the importance of children's participation when new measures or laws are being suggested and/or implemented (e.g., SOU 2017:67, SOU 2015:71).

In the included documents, as well as most of the excluded that touched on matters related to children, the Barnombudsman (Ombudsman for Children) was consulted. This indicates a well-established routine of taking children's perspective in matters concerning their welfare in governmental work. However, it was not always clear to what extent the Barnombudsman consulted children directly in the matter. In some cases, the function was only referred to in the list of referral bodies (e.g., Skr. 2013/14:91), whilst other times it was specified that the Barnombudsman had been tasked with investigating the view of the target group directly (e.g. SOU 2018:68). It was also evident that in some cases it was not appropriate or possible to ask for children's opinions and ideas. These issues were mainly concerning crime against children such as child marriage, trafficking or human exploitation. In these circumstances the Barnombudsman plays an important role in representing the child's perspective.

Parent's participation was less emphasized than children's participation. If they were included, it was mostly through organizations representing parents (Maskrosföräldrar, Sveriges Makalösa Föräldrar, Femmis m fl.). However, in some cases with a broader interest in parenthood and family relations, there was a greater collection of parent's interests,

experiences, and ideas (SOU 2019:32, SOU 2006:37). The main purpose with collecting parents' opinions and participation were, in most documents, to get an idea of how the cooperation between parents and social welfare authorities could be strengthened to reassure the best interest of the children. Although, in some cases the purpose was to investigate how to strengthen the safety of adult family members (SOU 2014:49). The fact that parental participation was overall lower than children's participation could be a result of the strengthened child's perspective during the last years in the Swedish legislation, where parents' decisive right over their children is somewhat decreased in some circumstances. This is shown in for example Prop. 2009/10:192.

*(b) The extent to which such participation has been implemented*

No data

## **26.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services**

*(i) The priorities in child welfare and family policy*

Equal healthcare, childcare, and support to all children and families are among the top priorities of Swedish social services. For this purpose, national programs to reach all parents and children through childcare, health, and family centers have been implemented. The large majority of parents take their children to the visits included in these national programs. There have been efforts to development support services with a goal of increased proximity. For example, family centers where different professionals provide support to families have been widespread. These centers create support groups and implement various programs for new parents and young children.

Welfare in Sweden is described as the "Swedish model" and in general, thus, should offer everyone the same right to welfare. The social democratic party has had an important influence on today's welfare system in Sweden (Thunberg, 2012). Concepts such as social safety for all people has characterized the political processes and discussions in Sweden. The real changes to become a general welfare institution took place after 1960 (Rothstein, 2010). Today, equality, solidarity, and fairness are important words to describe the welfare system in Sweden. This means that social services (e.g., to families), healthcare, and school should be equal for all. During late 1900, the welfare system has undergone large downsizing (SOU 2001:79).

*(ii) The main types of family provision and support and key features (e.g., different types of cash support (universal and targeted), work-family reconciliation measures and*

*children's/family services, childcare etc.) (no line limit here)*

In Sweden parents are eligible for up to 480 days of paid parental leave. Each parent has a dedicated three months, and the rest of the days could be shared as the parents wish. In addition, there is subsidized childcare for all children between 3-5 years of age, in which they have the right to 15 hours of daycare each week free of charge. Parents also have the possibility to stay at home with children who are sick, without a loss in salary. Parents are also eligible for additional compensations if their children have disabilities.

*(iii) The types of funding involved such as state, charity vs private sector providers and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners*

The social services (run by the National Board of Health and Welfare) in each municipality have the responsibility to make sure that children are growing up in positive environments. There are variations to what different municipalities are offering in terms of family support, but some are national. For example, family centres are run by the central government and include professionals from the medical, social, and pedagogical areas to be able to support families. These are open for all parents and are located in several areas (most commonly in disadvantaged areas). These centres have shown to be effective in offering support to families and parents, and increase the possibility for preventative work with families (Bing, 2011; Bing & Abrahamsson, 2011). The Swedish church offers similar meeting places for families as well. Other local charity providers are available and can offer support to families.

*(iv) Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations*

Several state authorities have the responsibility to monitor the services offered to families and young people. For example, the Social Services (Socialtjänst) and the National Agency for Education (Skolverket) are two of the key overseeing organizations. The government can assign state authorities with the evaluation of different questions and issues, which yield to comprehensive research reports or policy documents.

*(v) Limitations in national and official data and statistics*

Sweden has a comprehensive and effective system of data collection. Most data is collected or stored and managed by Statistics Sweden (SCB).

**26.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision. What are the prominent policy and practice developments related to family support services from children's rights, social equality and evidence-informed perspectives?**

Swedish agencies value evidence-based practice and have been implementing initiatives to increase evidence-based practices at all levels. Despite the advances and relatively better position in Sweden, compared to average levels in the EU, there are still gaps and room for improvement. For example, Sweden offers generous parental leave with equal rights of use for both mothers and fathers. However, fathers' use of parental leave is not yet equal to that of mothers. In addition, parenting programs are widely used at various levels. Nevertheless, there are still very limited programs that are designed to address the unique needs of immigrant families and children. However, there have been recent initiatives to develop such programs, especially since 2015, which have not yet yielded well-established evidence-based programs that are widely used.

*(i) What are the pressing policy, practice and research challenges impeding developments?*

Although provisions of services are equally available to everyone, certain social groups either have limited access to these services or underuse the services. Citizens with an immigrant background form one of these particular groups. There is a need to increase their access and use of these services at the level of wider population.

*(ii) What are the pressing gaps in provision?*

In Sweden, the government's social department has developed a national strategy to increase the quality of support to parents and families. In this strategy, some goals and needs concerning support provision are identified. For example, there is a need to gain more knowledge about what support should look like, depending on the specific family, and its needs and background. Hence, there is a need for scientific knowledge about how programs can be adapted to the context and to different parent groups in practice. The current national strategy specifies that support to families and parents should be guided by children's rights perspective (in line with the convention on the rights of the child that became a law in Sweden in January 2020) and equality. Three specific goals are identified: (1) more evidence-based knowledge is needed; (2) support should become more available to a larger majority of parents in Sweden; and (3) there is a need for a well-functioning organization around the support provision to families.

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## 27 THE UK - National report on family support policy & provision

**Harriet Churchill<sup>52</sup>**

### 27.1 Trends and issues related to demography

*(i) Fertility rates*

According to Eurostat, the UK fertility rate (Total Fertility Rate (TFR) measure) has seen some fluctuation in the last 20 years within a range of 1.91 to 1.63 TFR. Overall, the UK in recent decades has witnessed lower fertility rates (e.g., TFR below 2) compared to the 1950s and 1960s.

Table 1. *Total fertility rates*

Year	Fertility rate
2010	1.92
2015	1.80
2016	1.79
2017	1.74
2018	1.68

<sup>52</sup> I would like to thank UK EurofamNet members for their contributions to this national survey: Andy Lloyd (Leeds City Council), Mandi McDonald (Queens University, Belfast), Helen Dunn (Department of Health, Northern Ireland), John Davis (University of Strathclyde, Scotland), and Mary Smith (former Director of Children's Services, Scotland).

Source: Eurostat 2020

*(ii) Families with children by number of children*

From 2010 to 2019, the majority of family households with dependent children had one child followed closely by those with two children. During this period of minority of family households with dependent children had three or more children (ranging from 14-15.8% (Table 2). There has been a slight trend towards an increasing percentage of families having two or more children over this period (Table 2).

Table 2. *Family households by number of dependent children (% of family households by number of dependent children)*

Year	No. of children		
	1	2	3+
	%		
2010	46.3	38.9	14
2015	45.2	40	14.8
2016	44.7	40.5	14.8
2017	45	39.9	15.1
2018	44.1	40.1	15.8
2019	43.7	41.2	15.1

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2020a)

*(iii) Percentage of the population from 0 to 19*

During the period 2010 to 2019, the share of persons aged 0-19 slightly declined in the UK but consistently remained above the EU28 average (Table 3).

Table 3. *Population 19 years and under*

Year	%
2010	24.1
2015	23.6
2016	23.6
2017	23.5
2018	23.5
2019	23.4

Source: Eurostat 2020.

*(iv) Percentage of population over working (retiring) age*

Although akin to average EU trends, the population is ageing in the UK, the proportion of the population over working age (according to the Eurostat measure) was slightly lower in 2019 standing at 18.4% compared to the EU28 average of 20% (Eurostat 2020). Overall, from 2010 to 2019 there was a slight increase in the proportion of the population that are at retirement age (Table 4).

Table 4. *Population over working age*

Year	%
2010	16.3
2015	17.7
2016	17.9
2017	18.1
2018	18.2
2019	18.4

Source: Eurostat 2020.

*(v) Cultural/social/ethnic diversity and identities*

According to the Office of National Statistics (ONS), in the last available population data for England and Wales from 2001 to 2011, the percentage of the population that identified as having a White British ethnic background decreased from 87.4% of the population to 80.5% (ONS, 2021a). Conversely over the same period, there were increasing trends in the following categories. Those who identified as having a White Other ethnic background increased from 2.6% to 4.4%, and those who identified as having a Black African background increased from 0.9% to 1.8%. Recently, the 2021 Census data has been collected and is due to be reported in 2022.

In total, according to the 2011 Census, the total population of England and Wales, 86.0% of the population identified as having a White British and White Other ethnic background while 7.5% of the population identified as having an Asian British and Asian Other ethnic background. These trends were followed by 3.3% of the population identifying with a Black British or Black Other ethnic background, 2.2% of the population identifying with a Mixed/Multiple British or Other ethnic identity and 1.0% of the population identifying with an alternative ethnic identity (ONS, 2021a).

Please see question 3 response below for socio-economic trends and at-risk groups review.

*(vi) Migration patterns*

Eurostat figures show that the number of migrants in the UK has increased from 526,046 in 2010 to 603,953 in 2018 (Table 5). However, figures fluctuated on a year-by-year basis. The number of migrants from non-EU countries with a low Human Development Index (HDI) during these years ranged from 20,744 to 16,421, standing at 20,366 in 2018 (Table 5).

Table 5. *Number of immigrants*

Year	No. of immigrants	
	No of immigrants from non-EU countries with low HDI	Total
2013	20,744	526,046
2014	16,421	631,991
2015	17,129	631,452
2016	18,570	588,993
2017	19,546	644,209
2018	20,366	603,953

Source: Eurostat 2020.

## 27.2 Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles and children's living arrangements

(i) *Family household types*

Table 7 presents ONS data for the UK on numbers and percentages of household types according to the main categories used for official statistics: one person households, two or more unrelated adult households, couple households (with and without children), lone parent family households, and multi-family households. Over the last two decades, there have been slightly above average increases in one-person households and multi-family households compared to the other categories (ONS, 2020a). Overall, couple households with and without children have consistently formed the largest household type category in this dataset that runs from 1996 to 2020, followed by one-person households, lone-parent households, two or more unrelated adult households and multi-family households (ONS, 2020a).

Table 7. *Households by type of household and family (UK)*

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
One-person households (total thousands)	7,743	7,660	7,715	8,007	8,197
Two or more unrelated adult households	863	897	845	831	787
Couple and couple family households (total thousands)	15,489	15,694	15,694	15,733	15,849
Couple no children (%)	50%	49%	50%	50%	50%
Couple 1-2 children (%)	32%	32%	32%	32%	33%
Couple 3+ children (%)	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%

Couple and non-dependent children only (%)	12%	13%	12%	12%	11%
Lone-parent family households (total thousands)	2,740	2,668	2,668	2,695	2,695
Lone parent with dependent children (%)	64%	63%	63%	63%	62%
Lone parent with non-dependent children only (%)	36%	37%	37%	37%	38%
Multi-family households (total thousands)	323	304	304	310	297
Total households (thousands)	27,046	27,109	27,226	27,576	27,824

Source: ONS (2020a).

Table 7 and 8 indicate the official categories used to collect data on family households (households with dependent children) and present the official data from ONS for recent years. An important trend according to ONS (2020a) data, which is presented in Table 7 for 2015-2019, is 79% of family households in 1996 were headed by a couple and 21% were headed by a lone parent. This compares to 78% and 22% in 2019. This indicates considerable continuity in family household trends according to the broad categories of couple versus lone parent-headed family households. However, when we examine the data provided in Table 8, we can note the diversification of the 'couple-headed family household' category which has occurred during this time. This data draws from an alternative and more refined dataset. It indicates the increase in heterosexual cohabiting couple-headed families with dependent children, and the official recognition of same-sex partnerships and inclusion of these family types in official data.

We also see trends in lone parent-headed families have been stable since 2000, and a consistent majority tend to be lone-mother headed families while a sizeable number are also headed by lone fathers.

Table 8. *Family households with dependent children by type (UK)*

Total numbers in 000s	2000	2005	2010	2015	2019
Married couple	4,918 (67%)	4,732 (63%)	4,701 (60%)	4,703 (59%)	4,935 (61%)
Civil partnership couple	-	-	2 (<0.1%)	4 (<0.1%)	5 (<0.1%)
Heterosexual couple cohabiting	739 (10%)	899 (12%)	1,077 (14%)	1,251 (16%)	1,307 (16%)
Same-sex couple cohabiting	-	3 (<0.1%)	3 (<0.1%)	3 (<0.1%)	3 (<0.1%)
Lone parent	1,698 (23%)	1,883 (25%)	2,002 (26%)	1,973 (25%)	1,793 (22%)
Lone mother (% of lone parent)	1,550 (91%)	1,708 (91%)	1,813 (91%)	1,771 (90%)	1,622 (90%)
Lone father (% of lone parent)	147 (9%)	175 (9%)	188 (9%)	203 (9%)	172 (9%)
Family households with dependent children	7,355	7,517	7,784	7,961	8,043

Source: ONS 2020b.

*(ii) Marriage and divorce rates*

From 2010 to 2016, the crude marriage rate in the UK stood at around the EU average rate with four married adults per 1000 of the adult population (Table 9). Overall, in the UK in the post-war period since the 1960s and 1970s there has been a decline in the total number of marriages. In

the year 1972, official statistics report there were 426,241 marriages in England and Wales; a figure which fell to 239,020 marriages in the year 2015 (ONS 2019a).

Table 9. *Crude marriage rate*

Year	Per 1000 adult population
2010	4.5
2015	4.4
2016	4.4
2017	-
2018	-

Source: Eurostat 2020.

The crude divorce rate in the UK during these years has also more or less mirrored EU28 averages data. The crude divorce rate in 2010 in the UK stood at 2.1 divorced adults per 1000 adults in the population and reduced to 1.8 per 1000 in 2016 (Table 10). The divorce rate in England and Wales significantly rose in the mid-1960s to mid-1970s with 32,052 divorces in 1963 compared to 119,025 divorces in 1972 (ONS, 2019a). An important factor in explaining these trends was the passing of the 1969 Divorce Act. Divorces rates continue to rise but at a slower rate in the 1980s and 1990s, reaching a peak of 165,018 divorces in 1993 (ONS, 2019a). Data for 2018, whereby 90,871 divorces are recorded, indicates a persistent recent annual trend of falling or stable divorce rates (ONS, 2019a). According to Eurostat data, the small decline of divorce rates is captured in Table 11 below whereby the divorce rate measured by number of divorces per 100 marriages has fallen in the UK from 45.8 in 2013 to 41.2 in 2016.

Table 10. *Crude divorce rate*

Year	Per 1000 adult population
2010	2.1
2011	2.1
2012	2.0
2013	2.0
2014	1.9
2015	1.7
2016	1.8

Source: Eurostat 2020.

Table 11. *Number of divorces per 100 marriages*

Year	No.
2011	45.5
2012	-
2013	45.8
2014	41.7

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2015	39.6
2016	41.2
2017	-

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Source: Eurostat 2020.

### *(iii) Lone-parent families*

The number of lone parent family households in the UK increased substantially in the last three decades of the 20th century. This increase was driven in the main by increases in divorced, separated and never-married lone mother-headed families. Since 2000 the proportion of families with children headed by a lone parent has stood at around 25%, although the specific figures vary somewhat on a year-by-year basis and according to the official survey source (e.g. the Census or Labour Force Survey) (ONS, 2020b). As with all snapshot annual survey data for family household trends, it is important to note the dynamic nature of the annual data with several children and parents moving between family household types across each year. A study published in 2008 reported lone parenthood in England and Wales lasts on average five years (Skew et al, 2008). Lone-parent family households, in average terms, tend to have fewer children compared to couple-headed family households. In 2018, official data reported just over half of lone-parent family households had one dependent child (ONS, 2020b).

### *(iv) New family forms such as same-sex couple households*

In 2004, the Civil Partnership Act was passed which enabled same-sex couples to register as a civil partnership and be afforded similar legal rights as married heterosexual couples. This includes rights to be treated akin to a married couple in relation to property rights, social security and pension benefits, parental rights and duties, and next-of-kin- rights. The legislation introduced a formal legal process for separation akin to divorce. The Scottish Parliament granted the UK Parliament powers to legislate, on this occasion, for Scotland so the Act applies UK-wide. The highest annual number of civil partnerships was in 2006 when 14,943 civil partnerships (following full implementation of the Act) were registered (ONS, 2020c). Since this year there have been lower numbers of partnerships registered per year, with 5,646 registered in 2013, 1,683 registered in 2014 and 994 registered in 2019 (ONS, 2020c). Following a

successful legal case, the Civil Partnerships, Marriages and Deaths Act 2019 extended civil partnership rights to heterosexual couples. The 2019 Act only applies to England and Wales.

The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act was passed in England and Wales in 2013 and came into force in 2014. The Act enables same-sex couples (including those who had registered as a civil partnership) to marry in civil and religious ceremonies; and thereby be afforded the legal rights and duties of married couples. According to the ONS (2020d), in 2017 there were 6,932 same-sex marriages in England and Wales. There has been a stable trend since the introduction of the 2013 Act that same-sex marriages each year are 44% between male couples and 56% between female couples (ONS, 2020d).

Scotland introduced the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act in 2014 which enables same-sex couples to marry and be afforded rights and duties as married couples. Similar to England and Wales, a peak in the number of same-sex marriages occurred following the implementation of the Act. In 2015 there was a peak of 1,671 same-sex marriages conducted (National Records of Scotland [NRS], 2020), while in 2018 there were 912 same-sex marriages (NRS, 2020).

*(v) Family structures and changes across social groups*

ONS (2020e) presented UK data on household trends according to ethnic categories. The data was drawn from the 2011 Census which employed an approach to ethnic diversity based on self-reported categorization with respondents offered five broad ethnic categories and 18 sub-categories. Quoting directly from the ONS, the five broad ethnic categories are:

- **White** (e.g., English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British; Irish; Gypsy or Irish Traveller; Any other White background)
- **Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups** (e.g., White and Black Caribbean; White and Black African; White and Asian; Any other Mixed or Multiple ethnic background)
- **Asian or Asian British** (e.g., Indian; Pakistani; Bangladeshi; Chinese; Any other Asian background)
- **Black, African, Caribbean or Black British** (e.g., African; Caribbean; Any other Black, African or Caribbean background)
- **Other ethnic group** (e.g. Arab; Any other ethnic group) (ONS, 2021)

Table 11 presents the official Census data collected in 2011 for national trends in household and family types according to ethnicity. The Census data is reported according to a categorisation of six household types: one person households; married couple households

(including same-sex married couples but excluding pensioner couples); cohabiting couple households; lone-parent households, and pensioner couple households. The data indicates that:

- marriage rates are significantly higher among those from Asian backgrounds and ‘Other’ ethnic backgrounds;
- cohabiting couple rates are highest among those from Mixed ethnic backgrounds followed by those from White ethnic backgrounds;
- and lone parenthood is significantly higher among those from Black ethnic backgrounds and those from Mixed ethnic backgrounds.

Table 12: *Household types according to ethnic categories, % of households per ethnic category (HH) (based on Census 2011 categorisations and data)*

Ethnic category	One Person HH	Pensioner couple only HH	Married couple HH (including same-sex couples, excluding pensioner couples)	Cohabiting couple HH	Lone parent HH	Other HH
Asian	16	2	47	4	9	22
Black	31	2	22	7	24	14
Mixed	35	2	20	11	19	13
White	31	9	33	10	10	7
Other	31	1	37	5	11	15

Source: ONS (2021).

When published, Census data collected in 2021 will provide important up-to-date data on these trends.

*(vi) Children and youth living in institutions*

Official data concerning the total number of children and young people living in institutions in the UK is not collected. However, an indication of the rates of children and young people living in different types of institutions can be provided from official data about the number of children and young people living in residential care settings and youth justice settings.

In England, Local Authorities (LAs) responsible for local government, report annual statistics to the Department of Education (DfE) about children aged under 18 and their involvement with children's social care services<sup>53</sup>. There are 152 LAs in England and these are responsible for children's social care and social services delivery and standards. In 2019, it was reported that for March 2018 to March 2019, out of the 12 million children living in England just over 400,000 (3%) were involved in the children's social care system (Ofsted, 2020). Official data for the previous year reported that within this group, on 31st March 2018 there were 75,420 Looked After Children (LAC) (which is the term used to refer to children and young people for whom LAs have care responsibilities for within the children's social care system. LAC may be living with adoptee parents, in residential care settings or in foster care settings) (DfE, 2018). This total reflects a significant increase in the number of LAC in recent years, particularly since 2008 when there were just under 60,000 LAC on 31st March 2008 (DfE, 2018).

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) and Ministry of Justice (YJB & MoJ, 2021) report that on average, on any day from March 2019 to March 2020, there were 780 children and young people aged 10-17 in custody (living in youth justice institutions following a conviction for a crime). This represented a 9% fall in the number of children and young people in custody compared to 2018-2019 figures, and a 68% fall compared to 2009-2010 figures (YJB & MoJ, 2021).

*(vii) Children in out-of-home care such as foster care*

As mentioned above, the number of LAC on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 stood at 75,420 (DfE, 2018). The majority of these LAC (73%) were cared for by foster carers, including by their birth family relatives providing foster care (kinship care). However, 13% (9,890 children in total) LAC were living in various residential care settings. The specific DfE (2018) data is as follows:

- On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 there were 55,200 LAC in foster care placements (including kinship care placements);

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<sup>53</sup> Explain what children's social care refers to.

- On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 there were 2,230 LAC placed for adoption;
- On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 there were 8,530 LAC in secure units and children’s homes (additional types of residential care settings);
- On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 there were 1,230 LAC in residential care settings;
- On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 there were 130 LAC in residential school settings.

*(viii) Home-based support*

There is no nationally compiled data on families accessing home-based support across the UK.

**27.3 Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare**

*(i) Poverty rates*

According to Eurostat and national data, on several key indicators there were significant reductions in poverty rates in the UK in the late 1990s and early 2000s. However, since 2012/13 poverty rates have been on the rise once more. There is also significant evidence of increases in poverty rates during the COVID-19 pandemic, although official data does not capture as yet these recent trends. In light of Eurostat data presented in Table 13, 19% of the UK population was at-risk-of-poverty in 2005, and this figure fell to 15.9% in 2013. However, using the same Eurostat measure, 20.6% of children under 18 in the UK were classified as at-risk-of poverty in 2018 (Table 13).

Table 13. *At-risk-of-poverty rates (ARP), Eurostat data, children under 18 years and total population*

Year	ARP %
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	Children less than 18 years	Total population
2005	14.9	19
2008	17.3	18.7
2009	18.8	17.3
2010	19.2	17.1
2011	20.3	16.2
2012	19.4	16.0
2013	20.2	15.9
2014	20.2	16.8
2015	19.8	16.6
2016	19.9	15.9
2017	19.4	17.0
2018	20.6	18.9

Source: Eurostat 2020

Note: ARP measure threshold = living in a household with an income 60% below median after social transfers

The Household Below Average Incomes (HBAI) statistical bulletin is produced on an annual basis by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and draws on various government survey sources to present low income and poverty data trends for the UK. The latest HBAI statistical bulletin was published in March 2021. Key headline low-income data trends are summarised in Table 14. This table captures the significant reduction in relative poverty rates which was achieved in the late 1990s and early 2000s (from 1998/9 to 2004/5) which, according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF, 2021), “was a period where the drivers of employment, earnings, benefits and other income, and housing costs were all pushing to reduce poverty”. However, relative poverty rates in the UK, particularly among children, family households and working age adults, remained of major concern in the early 2000s given favourable national economic conditions at the time and when compared with other Western and European countries with similar economic profiles. More recently, before the pandemic, relative poverty rates were on the rise once more, particularly among households with children. Major drivers of these trends included austerity measures and cutbacks in child and social security benefits; stagnant, and for some groups negative wage increases; labour market disadvantages and rising housing and living costs (JRF, 2021).

Table 14. *Relative low-income trends, after-housing costs, HBAI survey series, UK*

	1996/ 97	2004/ 05	2007/ 08	2010/ 11	2013/ 14	2017/ 18	2018/ 19	2019/ 20
All individuals	25.1%	20.4%	22.5%	21.1%	21%	21.6%	21.9%	22%
Working age	20.6%	18.6%	20.7%	21.2%	20.9%	20.4%	21.1%	20.1%
Children (family households)	33.8%	28.1%	31.3%	27.2%	27.2%	29.3%	29.4%	30.7%
Pensioners	29.1%	17.3%	17.7%	14%	13.7%	16.5%	15.9%	18.1%

Source: HBAI survey data, DWP (2021a).

*Note 1:* Relative low-income measure after housing costs = annual household income below 60% median household income, adjusted for family size and composition, after housing mortgage or rent costs.

*Note 2:* Data is from the Family Resources Survey, data for 1996-2002 is for Great Britain, data for 2003-2020 is for UK.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), a major UK research centre, produces an authoritative independent 'UK Poverty' report. The analysis in the report is informed by official and leading research and data. Its 2021 report examined official and research data from the pre-pandemic years as well as during the pandemic. It concluded:

- Before early 2020 and the announcement of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK had a high rate of relative low-income poverty considering its national economic indicators. The HBAI series reported there were 14.39 million people in the UK living in relative poverty (relative low household income, after housing costs), 21.8% of the population. These figures were made up of: 8.4m working age adults (21.1%), 4.1 million children (29.4%) and 1.9 million pensioners (15.9%) (JRF, 2021, p.5; also see Table 14).
- However, relative low-income trends differed to some extent across the four nations of the UK. For example, in Scotland 19.2% of the population were classified as living in relative poverty in 2018-19 which was an increase from 17.8% in 2013/14; and in Northern Ireland 19.0% of the population were classified as living in relative poverty in 2018-19 which was a slight decrease from 20.8% in 2013/14. (JRF, 2021, p.18).
- Rates of child poverty had been on the rise since 2013/14. Children growing up in lone parent families, larger families (3+ children), families impacted by disability, private or social rented housing have higher rates of poverty according to the relative low-income measures (JRF, 2021, p.17). Children from Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Black and Mixed ethnic categories also have higher rates of poverty (JRF, 2021, p.17). Child poverty rates have increased during this period due to a combination of reductions in family and social security benefits, mothers' employment trends (e.g. more likely to work part-time, be vulnerable to low pay, and face work-family conflicts), rising housing and living costs, and detrimental economic circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic (JRF, 2021, also see Hawes, 2019).
- Rates of in-work poverty had particularly been on the rise since 2014/5. Increasing rates of part-time work, temporary work, and low or negative wage growth were major drivers for this trend (JRF, 2021, p.7). Further, "the [employment] sector, number of hours and

hourly pay, location, someone's gender, ethnicity and age, and barriers such as availability of childcare and transport all determine whether someone is in poverty, and whether they are able to escape it through work." (JRF, 2021, p.7). The report also concluded that comparisons by household and family types indicate that lone parents have the highest in-work poverty rate, while a couple without children have the lowest (JRF, 2021, p.28). Reasons for this include: lone parents are "more likely to be women, working in a low-wage sector, underemployed, and restricted by childcare and transport." (JRF, 2021, p.28).

- Groups vulnerable to poverty before the pandemic were also likely to disproportionately experience increased poverty and economic strain during the pandemic. In addition, a combination of health, employment, economic, and care-related challenges during the pandemic increased the range of groups and individuals facing economic strain and poverty since early 2020.
- Those particularly at risk of poverty during the pandemic include: part-time workers, low-paid workers and sectors with higher rates of in-work poverty and that had been negatively impacted by the pandemic (e.g. hospitality and accommodation); Black, Asian and minority ethnic households; lone parents families; individuals and families living in private rented housing and social rented housing; and areas of the UK with higher levels of unemployment, poverty and deprivation. (JRF, 2021, p.3).

*(ii) Employment/unemployment rates*

According to Eurostat data, in the last decade the UK has seen increases in employment rates, among men and women, and overall above EU28 average employment rates and below EU28 average unemployment rates (Tables 15 and 16).

Table 15. *Unemployment rate (annual average)*

Year	% of working age population
2010	7.8
2015	5.3
2016	4.8
2017	4.3
2018	4.0
2019	3.8

Source: Eurostat 2020.

Note: The unemployment measure = % of working age population available for employment but not in employment.

Table 16. *Employment rate by sex*

Year	Sex		
	Male	Female	Total
%			
2011	74.3	64.4	69.3
2013	75.4	65.8	70.5

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2015	77.6	67.9	72.7
2016	78.2	68.8	73.5
2017	78.6	69.7	74.1
2018	79.1	70.3	74.7
2019	79.2	71.1	-

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Source: Eurostat 2020.

Note: Employment measure = % of men and women of working age in employment.

Official national data (for the UK) uses last quarter statistics which leads to some differences in reported employment rates. Significant increases in employment rates in the last decade (pre-pandemic), however, are similarly evident. In 2009-2010, the last quarter employment rate for men was 75.5% and for women was 65.7% (DWP, 2021). In 2019-2020 these rates had increased to 80.3% for men and 72.2% for women (DWP, 2021). These trends have been accompanied by much debate about the causes and nature of this 'post-financial crisis employment boom' (Bell & Gardiner, 2019, p.3). Several key trends and issues are relevant to this UK review. Firstly, Bell & Gardiner (2019) argue that, on the one hand, income pressures on families with children (resulting from falling followed by stagnant wage levels 2008-2018; austerity measures and family benefit cutbacks) and, on the other hand, supportive policy measures for low earners and working parents (e.g. increased childcare support; an increase in minimum wage levels) contributed high employment rate increases among couple mothers and lone mothers. Drawing on Labour Force Survey (LFS) data the employment rate for couple mothers rose just over 5% from 2008 to 2019, reaching 76%; and the employment rate for lone mothers rose 11% from 2011 to 2019, reaching 68% in 2019 (Bell & Gardiner, 2019, p.21). Secondly, increases in insecure, temporary and low-paid forms of employment have been a major source of concern. Since the financial crisis, the number of jobs classified as flexible, insecure, temporary, part-time and based on 'zero-hours' contract increased. Women in particular have higher rates of part-time work, with 62% of employed women working full-time in 2019 and 38% working part-time (Devine et al. 2021). The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

estimated 4.5 million workers in the UK were in insecure work in 2018; while the number of workers estimated to be on zero-hour contracts rose from 168,000 in 2010 to 905,000 in 2018 (Hunt & McDaniel, 2017, p.3). The data on employment rates and insecure employment rates noted here relates to the pre-pandemic context.

It is important to note that according to Eurostat (2020) data that while employment rates in the UK in the last decade have been above average in EU standards, women's employment rate in the UK remains below their employment rate in several EU member states including Norway, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Iceland.

*(iii) Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage related to gender, age, ethnicity, migrant status and other social dimensions*

In addition to the points above, there are further important national patterns to note in employment and economic disadvantage. Employment patterns among young people aged 16-24 are important indicators of employment and economic prospects. According to Eurostat data, youth unemployment among this group stood at 14% in the UK in the third quarter of 2020 which was below the EU27 average of 18% (Eurostat, 2020). According to national data, the youth unemployment rate in the UK for the last quarter in 2020 stood at 14.3% which was an increase from 12.5% in the same quarter the previous year (Powell & Devine, 2021, p.4). These rates were more than three times national overall unemployment rates. Participation in further and higher education or vocational training schemes, which enables young people and young adults to accrue employment-related skills, qualifications, and resources, is also of major importance for this age group. In official statistics released in March 2021, it was estimated that 11.6% of young people aged 16-24 in the UK were not in employment, education or training (NEET) which was a slight increase from the previous year (ONS, 2021b). This is a concerning trend given the risk of poverty this poses for young people and the risk of detrimental long-term impacts on their prospects. In other respects, 44% of young people aged 18-24 in 2012 were in full-time or part-time further or higher education; an overall increase compared to the 1990s but a slight decrease compared to 2004 when the figure stood at 46% (BIS, 2014).

Table 17. % of young people aged 15-29, Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETs), UK data reported by Eurostat

Year	%
2010	14.6
2015	12.7
2016	12.3
2017	11.4
2018	11.7
2019	11.4

Source: Eurostat (2020).

Increase in women's and mothers' employment rates from early 2010 to early 20 were noted above. Higher rates of part-time, flexible, and insecure employment should also be noted among women and mothers compared to men and fathers. An additional dimension of gender patterns in employment is the gender pay gap. Although over the two decades there has been a reduced gender pay gap between men and women, UK official data for April 2020 reported that gender pay gap in median hourly pay (excluding overtime) in favour of men was 7.4% for full-time employees (Devine et al. 2021, p.19). Eurostat data (Table 18) for the Gender Pay Gap refers to the difference between average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees and of female paid employees (both full-time and part-time) as a percentage of average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees. It reports a declining but significant GPG, standing at 19.8% in 2018.

Table 18. *gender pay gap, all male vs female employees, UK data reported by Eurostat*

Year	%
2010	23.3
2015	21.0
2016	20.7
2017	20.8
2018	19.8

Source: Eurostat (2020).

People from ethnic minority backgrounds tend to experience higher unemployment rates than people from White British ethnic backgrounds. This disparity is compounded when gender is also considered. In the last quarter of 2020, women from a minority ethnic group had an unemployment rate of 10.6%, compared to a rate of 8.4% for men (Devine et al. 2021, p.15). In comparison, women and men from White ethnic background have lower rates of unemployment, standing at 4.0% (for women) and 4.9% for men in the last quarter of 2020 (Devine et al. 2021, p.15).

Employment and economic activity rates are highly marked by disability status in the UK. According to the latest labour market statistics, there were around 8.4 million disabled people of working age in early 2020, and it is estimated 4.4 million (53.6%) were in employment in the last quarter of 2020 (Powell, 2021). This reflected an increase in the number of disabled people in employment compared to the previous year but a decrease in the proportion of disabled people in employment. In comparison, 81.7% of those who are not disabled and of working age are in employment (Powell, 2021). Many disabled people of working age are particularly classified as 'economically inactive' (not actively seeking employment). In the last quarter of 2020, 53.1% of women with a disability and of working age were employed, while 6.3% were unemployed and 43% were economically inactive (Devine et al. 2021, p.17). In the same period,

51.3% of men with a disability and of working age were employed, while 10.4% were unemployed and 42.8% were economically inactive (Devine et al. 2021, p.17).

Employment and poverty rates vary by region and across the UK. For example, in the final quarter 2020, women's employment rate was highest in the South East (79%) and South West (78%); and it was lowest in Northern Ireland (68%) and the North East (69%) (Devine et al. 2021, p.13). Child poverty rates (the proportion of children living in households with annual incomes 60% below the median annual household income before housing costs) vary across the four nations of the UK with around 24% of dependent children living in relative low income in Scotland and Northern Ireland in 2018-2019 compared to 30% in England and 31% in Wales (JRF, 2020). The 20 Local Authority areas with the highest rates of child poverty according to this measure (after housing costs) had child poverty rates of 34-49% in 2013 and were located in London, the North West, the North East and the Midlands (Hirsch & Valadez, 2014).

*(iv) Patterns of education disadvantage*

There are substantial educational inequalities and disparities between young people and adults from different socioeconomic groups in the UK. Studies have identified this gap becomes evident even in the pre-school years. Reporting on Local Authority child development milestones data (the early years foundation stage profile assessment framework), the Social Mobility Commission (2019, p.23) reported 43% of Year 1 primary schools (aged 4-5) eligible for free school meals (eligibility for free school meals is provided for families on low incomes and in receipt of welfare benefits) did not achieve a good level of development in 2018 compared to 26% of Year 1 pupils not eligible for free school meals per cent of non-FSM eligible pupils. In addition, young people from poorer backgrounds in average terms do not achieve the same number or levels of qualifications at GCSE level (16 years of age) or A levels (18 years of age). For example, the percentage of free school meal eligible pupils achieving a grade 4/C or above in GCSE English and Maths in 2018 was 40 per cent compared with 68 per cent of all other pupils (Social Mobility Commission, 2019, p.38). In the same year, with respect to A Levels at age 19, only 16 per cent of those entitled to FSM achieved a pass grade for two A Levels (or a pass grade in two qualifications at 19 years equivalent to A Levels) compared with 39% of other pupils (Social Mobility Commission, 2019, p.viii). Further, while higher numbers of young people from low-income families enter higher education at 19 compared to a decade ago, this group continues to have lower higher education participation rates than young people from better off backgrounds. The Social Mobility Commission (2019, p.87) reported that only 26% of school pupils entitled to free school meals in 2018 entered higher education compared to the national rate of 46%.

*(v) Major social welfare trends such as disadvantage risks, welfare benefit receipt levels*

The Eurostat data on levels of severe material deprivation whereby individuals lack economic resources to access essentials for meeting basic needs and securing everyday necessities captures children’s heightened vulnerability to severe poverty in the UK. Table 19 show children aged under 18 are at higher risk of several material deprivation than the general population in the UK. Eurostat data also indicates severe material deprivation among children in the UK was below EU average rates from 2010 to 2017 but increased to above the average rate in 2018.

Table 19. *Severe Material Deprivation Rate (SMDR)*

Year	SMDR %	
	Children less than 18 years	Total
2010	7.3	4.8
2015	9.6	6.1
2016	7.5	5.2
2017	5.8	4.1
2018	7.1	4.6

Source: Eurostat 2020.

Following several years of declining rates, there have been large increases in welfare benefit recipients in 2020 to 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. The main benefit to consider here is Universal Credit (UC) which provides income support and employment requirements for unemployment and in part-time or low paid employment. On 12th March 2020, there were 3 million people in receipt of UC (DWP, 2021). On 14th Jan 2021 this had doubled to 6 million people (DWP, 2021).

*(vi) Housing problems*

There are considerable problems in accessing affordable and quality housing for many families with children on low incomes across the UK. The average house price increased by over 160% in real terms from mid-1996 to 2016 (Lund, 2017). Many are unable to afford home ownership due to high deposit costs for a mortgage, with home ownership in the UK generally on the decline. In 2005, there was a peak in home ownership with 70.5% of adult homeowners but this fell to 63.1% in 2016 (Lund, 2017). Increasing numbers of individuals are in private rented housing, which has seen average rent prices rise considerably higher than average income levels since 2012. This leads to a high housing cost burden for low-income families. A study found that in 2015, 70% of those living in private rented housing and in the lowest 20% of household incomes spent a third of their income on rental costs (Lund, 2017).

Homelessness is a significant problem. Using the concept of 'core homelessness' (to estimate levels of severe and immediate homelessness), Fitzpatrick et al's (2021) latest 'Homelessness Monitor: England' report estimated there were 220,000 individuals homeless in 2019, a figure which fell to 200,000 in 2020 following temporary emergency accommodation measures introduced by the UK government during the COVID-19 pandemic. These figures still remain higher than comparable estimates in previous years.

*Summary: The broader socio-economic context and trends which influence children's, parental and family circumstances and environments:*

In addition to the points above, the broader socio-economic context for children, parents and families in the UK is marked by: (1) the scale of socio-economic inequalities; and, (2) challenging macro-economic conditions since 2008/9. Overall, the UK has a relatively high level of income inequality compared to many other Western and Northern European countries. According to OECD data, the UK had a Gini coefficient of 0.366 in 2018, which in comparison to the 37 countries in the dataset, ranked the UK as sixth highest for income inequality (OECD, 2021). This trend reflects higher annual average income increases among richer households and individuals compared to poorer households and individuals. In the UK, from 2014-2019, median household income rose on by 2.2% (The Equality Trust, 2021; DWP, 2019). However, average household income for the richest fifth during this period rose by 4.7% while for the poorest fifth it fell by 1.6% (The Equality Trust, 2021; DWP, 2019). Secondly, the economic downturn and sluggish economic growth since 2008/9, followed by government austerity measures, have provided challenging economic and employment conditions for many, including problems arising from public sector pay freezes, job losses and slow earnings growth. From 1994 to 2005, the UK saw eight years of annual GDP growth at 3% or above (DWP, 2021a). However, from 2008 to 2010, the economy was in recession and since 2016, annual economic growth has been

relatively low ranging from 0.4 (in 2019/20) to 1.7 (in 2016/17) (DWP, 2021a). From 2008 to early 2020, there was a fall in annual levels of real household disposable income in three periods – 2008 to 2009, 2011 to 2012, and 2016 to 2017 (DWP, 2021a).

## **27.4 The national public policy orientations, frameworks, institutions, and actors' which shape the goals, substance and delivery of family support policy and provision**

### *(i) Membership to the EU - NO*

### *(ii) Relationship with European Union*

The UK exited the EU at 11pm on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020. Following a tumultuous withdrawal process and final withdrawal agreement, the UK-EU relationship is in unprecedented times, has been placed under considerable stress and is charting a new uncertain direction. On the part of recent UK Governments there is ongoing commitment to remain relatively well aligned with EU policies and standards in many areas, which has been reflected in recent UK legislation. However, there are also fraught areas and several issues of conflict and uncertainty, such as over the interpretation and implementation of the withdrawal agreements with respect of issues concerning Northern Ireland.

### *(iii) Influential policy actors and their orientation to family policy, family support and social policy*

In England, the Department of Education (DfE) has a lead role for children, youth, family support and education policy. Other important departments for family and children's policies include the Department of Health and Social Care; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government; and Department of Work and Pensions. The major political parties span the following policy orientations: Conservative Party (UK Government party, neo-liberal and conservative orientation); Labour Party (social liberal and social democratic orientation); Liberal Democrat Party (social liberal, social democratic and children's rights orientation); Scottish National Party (Scotland Government party, Scottish nationalist, social democratic and children's rights orientation); Green Party (social democratic, environmental orientation); Plaid Cymru (Political party for Wales, social democratic orientation); Sinn Fein (Irish Republican party, social democratic); Social Democratic and Labour Party (Irish Labour Party, social democratic, social liberal orientation). In addition, there are numerous formal organisations that are influential policy actors in these areas including Children's Commissioners, trade unions, professional associations and policy standards agencies.

### *(iv) Influential lobbying groups*

At the UK-wide level and at the England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland level there are many formal and NGO-led groups with close links and political influence in the areas of family policy, children's services and children's rights. These include the All Party Parliamentary Group for children which has cross-party/NGO/experts' representation, is coordinated by the National Children's Bureau and currently chaired by a Conservative Party MP. This group advocates for comprehensive policies and produces its own manifesto for children. The Coram Family and Childcare Trust is also an influential actor and coordinates the All Party Parliamentary Group on Families in the Early Years. Women's Budget Group (based on cross-party/NG/experts' representation) runs influential in social security, work-family and anti-poverty policy campaigns. The following are also highly influential and promote family friendly policies, gender equality and children's rights: Equalities and Human Rights Commission, Children's Rights Alliance, the Family and Childcare Trust, Gingerbread Lone Parents organisations, The Children's Society, Family Rights Group, National Children's Bureau, NSPCC and Barnardos. Further influential agencies include: Poverty Alliance Scotland, Reid Foundation, Institute Public Policy Research, Scottish Policy Foundation, Scotland Future Forum, and Action for Children.

*(v) Influential policy/research networks*

The All Party Parliamentary Groups are influential policy networks and are mentioned above. The Coram Family and Childcare Trust supports professionals and Local Authorities working with children and families; and undertakes and commissions research and surveys in the area. At the devolved administration and Local Authority levels, there are numerous children's and youth services strategic partnerships (made up of senior policy and agency representatives who make collaborative decisions about local priorities and developments). The National Centre for Social Research undertakes research and surveys on several issues related to families, parenting and child well-being. There are several family policy, child welfare, and children's rights research centres and units based in Universities.

*(vi) The political system and its relevance to family policy/family support*

The UK is representative parliamentary democracy. The executive branch of government (the Cabinet) is led by the Prime Minister and additional Ministerial (heads of government departments) positions. The UK's first-past-the-post electoral system has facilitated tendencies for single-party majority governments; and helps to maintain the dominance of 'two-party' politics (dominated by the UK Labour Party and Conservative Party) in the UK parliament. This has significant bearing on family policies and social policies as the political persuasion of the UK government has been dominated by the Conservative or Labour Party agendas. In Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, however, party politics departs from the two-party model with

Welsh, Scottish and Irish political parties having much influence and holding leading positions in devolved administrations.

*(vii) The democratic system and main political parties; unitary vs federal state structures; centralised vs decentralised structures)*

The UK is a unitary rather than federal state with the UK government and parliament having relatively centralised powers. Major public policy domains (e.g., fiscal policies, social security and employment policies) are the responsibility of UK-wide government departments and ministries who propose and pursue UK-wide policies and legislations (passed by the UK parliaments). Within these unitary structures, however, considerable social policy powers and responsibilities have, since the late 1990s, been decentralised to the ‘devolved administrations’ of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland which have their own legislatures (Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales, Northern Ireland Assembly), executives (Scottish Government, Welsh Government, Northern Ireland Executive), ministries and civil service. In addition, local government structures (as city-wide or county-wide local authorities) are very important across all four nations of the UK and have major responsibilities to design and deliver local services (e.g. education, children’s services, social services).

*(viii) The institutional framework for government and state roles and remits for family support in general and family support services in particular (e.g., Ministry roles, national vs local/regional government roles); (not more than 10 lines)*

National-level family policy has traditionally been ‘implicit’ and ‘fragmented’ in the UK, there has rarely been a dedicated family policy ministry in the post-war period. Rather family, children’s and youth policy remits are allocated across ministries and departments organised on the basis of health, education, social services, local government and youth justice. In the English context, the current main government departments are listed above under q.4 iii. Overall, the DfE has the most prominent departmental role. The DfE has a Minister of State for Children and Families, and a Minister of State for Vulnerable Children and Families. These positions are currently held by Conservative Party MPs within the current Conservative UK Government (elected in 2019 for a five-year term). Beyond education, the DfE is responsible for early years and childcare policies and service frameworks; and policies and frameworks for support and social services for children, families and youth (including family support, support and services for disabled and vulnerable children; and social care services for Looked After Children). Local Authority children’s services are responsible for the provision and standards of these services.

At the level of the devolved administrations, there are several key overarching government departments and directorates with a clear lead role for children and family policies.

The Scottish Government has established the Children and Families Directorate led by the Minister for Children and Young People. The Directorate describes its aims as adopting policies and overseeing the design and delivery of support systems which improve outcomes for children, youth and families. The Welsh Parliament has a Children's, Young People and Education Committee which oversees policy and practice developments in relation to children's well-being and rights, young people, and parental and family support. In Northern Ireland, the Department of Health has a lead role for family policy, family support and children's services. This Department houses the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (a body made up of senior leaders of all key services and organisations involved in working with and support children, youth and families in Northern Ireland) which has a lead role in overseeing support and services, and their quality and improvement.

*(ix) The ways in and degree to which professionals, parents/families, children and young people, and communities are involved in policymaking and reviews;*

Across the UK formal consultations with professional associations, trade unions, service user/parental/child and youth advocacy organisations, NGOs and stakeholder groups are routinely undertaken as part of national and local policy developments. However, the scale and scope of this process varies significantly across the UK and government departments. Prior to austerity measures (pre-2010) and under the former Labour Government in the UK, there was significant UK-government support, schemes and funding for parent, children's and youth participation programmes linked to schools (e.g. school councils), local authorities (e.g. youth parliaments, youth forums, parent forums, participation worker roles) and national initiatives such as training and development for mental health services (Sevasti-Melissa, 2015). There has been a distinctive decline in UK-government led funding and actions in this area since 2010. However, key roles such as the Children's Commissioners promote children's participation and rights; and key NGOs are also highly active in this area such as the Family Rights Group; Parents, Families and Allies Network and Children's Rights Alliance maintain a high profile for this agenda. At the Local Authority level there also often remains a strong focus on children's, parents and community participation within children's and youth services structures. Further, the devolved administrations and executives have maintained a high profile for this agenda and adopted a more strategic approach. The Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights for several years has run a successful Article 12 campaign promoting children's participation rights across all areas of public policy and in relation to all aspects of their lives. The Scottish Government ran a Year of Young People in 2018 promoting child and youth participation in society and policymaking; and passed legislation promoting duties on LAs to promote children's participation in local decision making. Local Authorities in Scotland often adopt local participation plans. Similar high-profile initiatives have been developed in Wales (e.g. Children and Youth

Participation good practice guide and standards; legislative duty on LAs to promote children's participation) and Northern Ireland (Parenting NI, funded by the NI Health and Social Care Board, delivers the parent participation project involving parents and families in decision-making relevant to them; NICCY, funded and coordinated by the Children's Commissioner in Northern Ireland promotes the rights of children and young people with a strong emphasis on participation rights). Wales has adopted legislation which places a duty on the Welsh government and its bodies to give due regard to the 1989 UNCRC in its policies and policymaking (see below). The Scottish Government is likewise pursuing reforms to adopt the UNCRC as part of its domestic legislation.

### **27.5 List the dedicated family and/or young people strategic policy documents that have been launched since the year 2000**

Prior to the current policy developments at the UK-wide and devolved levels, the period from 1997 to 2010 under the former Labour Government was particularly active in the area of family policy, children's services, and family and parenting support. There were several major strategic policy documents introduced and pursued. These do not reflect current UK government policies but continue to resonate widely with local authorities' policies and the strategic directions of the Scottish Government, Welsh Government, and the Northern Ireland Executive.

*Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003) and Children's Plans (DCSF, 2007, 2009)*

The former Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) adopted and implemented major children's and family services reforms from 2004 to 2010 under the *Every Child Matters* and *Children's Plan* strategies. The implementation of these strategies was accompanied by significant funding, implementation targets and evaluation studies. The strategies sought to promote five outcomes for children and young people (under 19 years old): keeping safe, being healthy, enjoying and achieving in education, escaping poverty and making a positive contribution to society. The strategies promoted measures for cross-departmental and inter-sectoral joint-up working for the benefit of children and young people (e.g. partnership working and multi-agency services across health, education, social welfare and social services). Local Sure Start programmes and children's centres were rolled out nationally in England and Wales, providing a range of universal and targeted family support, childcare and health services for families and parents with pre-school children. Extended schools were introduced whereby schools housed and delivered support, childcare and youth services. The strategies led to increased investment and provision in universal, specialist, targeted and statutory services for children and families. Local services were integrated via various models for co-located services, strategic service partnerships, shared duties for provision and information sharing, and multi-agency needs assessments.

Local Authorities also had duties to produce, implement and evaluate local Children's and Young Person's Plans.

*Local Authority Parenting Support Strategies (DfES, 2006) and the Think Family strategy (SETF, 2007)*

The former Department of Education and Skills (DfES) and Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) published strategic policy documents which provided guidance for Local Authorities to adopt and implement local *Parenting Support Strategies* and *Think Family* approaches. These policies and their associated funding streams promoted the development of positive parenting initiatives and services, local parenting support coordinators and workers, 'team around the child and family' service models, and multi-agency intensive family support services. The *Think Family* strategy particularly promoted the importance of 'whole family support' assessments and approaches for parents and children in need. This approach sought to identify and address wider family support needs in economic, practical and therapeutic terms; and seek to strengthen family relationships alongside providing more specific parental and child support. The agenda particularly stressed the need to improve partnership and joint-up working between adults and children's services, and involve parents and children in support services.

In addition, other policy strategies under the former Labour Government which set in train reforms developed since include those related to its welfare-to-work policies (e.g. *Raising expectations and increasing support; Reforming welfare for the future*, DWP 2008); childcare and early years policies (e.g. *1998 National Childcare Strategy*, DfE, 1998; *Ten-year childcare action plan*, DfE 2004) and parental leave reforms (e.g. *Work and parents: Competitiveness and choice*, DTI, 2000).

Under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Government (2010-2015) there were several strategic policy documents published and pursued which also very much reflect recent Conservative governments' (since 2015) policies:

*Child Poverty Strategy 2011-2014 (HM Government, 2011), Social Justice Strategy 2013-2010 (HM Government, 2012), Child Poverty Strategy 2014-2017 (HM Government, 2014)*

These documents laid out the main policy directions in relation to economic/benefits support to children, youth and families; work-family policy changes and reforms to services for children and families. Austerity measures and cutbacks in welfare benefits and family benefits were major themes in order to reduce levels of national debt following the 2008 financial crisis and in order to 'tackle welfare dependency and promote employment'. Reduced funding for Local Authorities was also a key theme in austerity policies, which led to reduced spending and provision in family

support, youth services and children's services. Major reforms to the welfare benefit system were introduced such as the introduction of Universal Credit; a new integrated form of out-of-work and in-work benefit for those with low incomes with different levels of economic support provided to parents with children, those with housing support needs and those impacted by disability. Government duties to meet 2020 targets for reducing child poverty rates were abolished and replaced with more specific and limited targets to reduce the number of children growing up in households with no adult in paid work. A range of schemes were introduced to tackle specific areas of targeted needs among 'vulnerable children and families', such as mental health services and free school meals provision. A major national programme called the 'Troubled Families Programme' was introduced which provided funding for Local Authorities to fund family key worker and intensive support services for families with children and young people impacted by youth offending, school exclusion, truancy, domestic violence, child welfare concerns, severe health problems, and reliance on welfare benefits.

The Conservative Governments, since 2015, have not tended to produce or pursue wide-ranging national strategic policy documents but have rather published specific strategies on specific issues or areas. Children's and family policy at the level of the UK Government could be described as implicit and fragmented once more. However, important strategic documents include:

*Transforming children's and young people mental health (DH, 2017)*

The UK has seen worsening mental health for children and young people for several years. This policy document pledged to address issues such as limited access to specialist mental health support and services for young people and families. It pledged to invest in Designated Senior Leads for mental health in schools and colleges; to fund new children's and youth Mental Health Support Teams; and to reduce waiting times for access to specialist NHS children and young people's mental health services.

*Strategy to end violence against women and girls 2016-2020 (updated for 2020-2024)  
(Home Office, 2016, 2020)*

This strategy built on early versions of the strategy first introduced in 2010, to take a four-pillar approach to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls: prevention, provision of services, partnership working and pursuing perpetrators – remain the right framework. The strategy sought to build on legislative, criminal justice, and services reforms to further strengthen prosecution against perpetrators and improve support for victims.

*Supporting families 2021-22 and beyond (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2021)*

This policy document was only published online and was provided an ‘updated policy narrative’ about the Troubled Families Programmes. The programme has been renamed the ‘Supporting families programme’ and received a new round of funding for 2021-22. The policy update pledged to continue the programme and promote further improvements in whole family support approaches across Local Authorities for families with multiple disadvantages. The programme also provides funding for Local Authorities to improve and integrate local services, and data monitoring and evaluation approaches.

*The Best Start in Life: a vision for the 1001 critical days (HM Government, 2021)*

This report has recently been published and reports on the findings and recommendations of the Early Years Healthy Development Review led by Conservative MP Andrea Leadsome. The review particularly focused on the health and well-being of infants (under 2 years) and parents. It pledged a number of policy actions to be implemented from 2021 and in the coming years including: a new joined up ‘start for life’ support offer for families, the development of more family hubs (community-based and integrated service support centres and partnerships), improved information and support for parents and families including via digital platforms and means; and investment in the early childhood years services workforce.

The devolved administrations have retained an emphasis on adopting and implementing overarching national strategic policy and practice frameworks, taking forward similar approaches to those set out in *Every Child Matters*. Key current policy strategies include:

*Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) (Scottish Government, 2021)*

The GIRFEC policy and practice framework for family support and children’s rights was introduced in Scotland in 2006. The latest update of this strategic approach occurred in 2018. The framework aims to support families and make sure children and young people ‘get the right support, at the right time, from the right people’ (Scottish Government, 2021). The strategy states its aims to help children and young people to ‘feel loved, safe and respected so that they can fulfil their potential (Scottish Government, 2021). The GIRFEC framework is based on children’s rights and parental support rights principles. As part of this policy strategy, the Children’s and Families Directorate in the Scottish Government provides resources for professionals and families; it ensures each child and young person and their families have a named person (professional) who is their point of contact for family and social support services; it ensures services are delivered in a coordinated way responsive to needs; it provides an effective and ethical basis for information sharing; and it is advised by an implementation group and practice panel.

*Every child, every chance: Tackling child poverty delivery plan 2018-2022 (Scottish Government, 2018)*

Following the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017, which maintained the UK 2010 Child Poverty Act child reduction targets (which were abolished by the UK Government), the Scottish Government published this child poverty reduction plan. It set out a series of policy actions which have subsequently been the focus of implementation and delivery actions in Scotland. The policy actions spanned: employment support for parents, improved support for families and children at risk of poverty (e.g., young parents, lone parents, families impacted by disability), improved economic support for families, and community development and community-based family support services.

*Child Poverty Strategy Progress Report 2019 (Welsh Government, 2019)*

This policy strategy and report updates the 2015 Child Poverty Strategy for Wales. To address poverty rates in Wales it pledges to renew policy actions in the areas of food poverty, housing insecurity, in-work poverty, childcare support, economic support for families, health inequalities, and educational support.

*Draft Children's Rights Scheme 2021 (Welsh Government, 2020)*

For several years the Welsh Government has been taking measures to embed a children's rights approach to social and family policies based on the principles laid out in the 1989 UNCRC. In 2011 the Welsh Government introduced legislation called the 'Rights of the Child and Young Person (Wales) Measure' which placed a duty on the government and its bodies to have systematic due regard for the UNCRC in its policies and policymaking. The Draft Children's Rights Scheme proposes how the Welsh Government, and its bodies will fulfil this duty.

*Families Matters (DHSSPS, 2009)*

This policy strategy continues to provide an important basis as a family and parenting support strategy for Northern Ireland. The Department of Health is currently developing a new family and parenting support strategy as a follow-up policy document and framework. The Families Matter strategy has been instrumental in developing and strengthening family support measures and services in Northern Ireland. As part of this policy strategy and its associated funding and initiatives, Northern Ireland has developed early intervention services, a parenting helpline, a family and parenting support website, child contact centres, family hubs (integrated service centres and networks for children and parents), disability support, improved services to tackle domestic and sexual violence, financial support for families, mental health services, and support for young carers.

*Northern Ireland's Children and Young People's Plan 2017-2020 (Department of Health, 2017)*

This strategic plan for children and young people in Northern Ireland takes a children's rights approach and works in partnership with all agencies and services in order to improve eight key child well-being domains. It aims to promote collaboration and co-production in the planning, delivery and improvement of children's services and family support through inter-agency working, collaborative service frameworks, and service user participation.

For each policy document indicate:

*(a) Whether participation of families and young people has been mentioned in the document*

The *Every Child Matters* and *Children's Plans* documents involved extensive consultation with children, young people, and parents. The '*Best Start in Life*' report also involved extensive consultation with parents and professional groups. Both of these documents promote children's, youth, and parents' participation in the development of local services. All of the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland strategies above were informed by significant community consultation with children, young people and families. These strategies have also been introduced and reviewed with participation forums and mechanisms in place to enable routine involvement of children and parents in policy decision making.

*(b) The extent to which such participation has been implemented*

Children's and parents' participation have been implemented across sectors and strategies in a range of ways. These include setting up local forums and participation frameworks for routine consultation about local service provision. It also includes involving children, young people and parents in specific schemes and initiatives such as developing training tools for professionals. Among the devolved administrations there are extensive examples of investment in, and development of, influential participation structures. For example, the Scottish Children's Parliament plays a major role in policy consultation and reviews.

**27.6 The main forms and modalities of child and family support provision since 2000 with a particular emphasis on approaches to, and developments in, child and family support services**

*(i) The priorities in child welfare and family policy*

Current priorities in child welfare and family policy have been dominated by public health protections, employment support, education and income support measures for families and children during the COVID-19 pandemic (also see below). Prior to the pandemic and as

indicated by the overview of key policy strategies above, UK-wide policies and measures focused on England have tended in recent years to focus on a narrow policy agenda providing improvements in targeted support and services for children and families in high need; improving mental health services; tackling domestic violence, sexual abuse and child exploitation; and promoting employment opportunities through welfare-to-work schemes, in-work benefits, improvements in parental leaves, and childcare support improvements. These agendas were overshadowed by austerity policies pursued from 2010 to 2018, whereby public spending cuts were a high priority across the majority of government departments particularly local government, social welfare and protection, and children's and youth services. Within the current policy strategies being pursued by the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, we see more overt and comprehensive priorities around reducing child poverty, supporting families, promoting positive parenting and promoting children's rights.

*(ii) The main types of family provision and support and key features (e.g. different types of cash support (universal and targeted, work-family reconciliation measures and children's/family services, childcare etc.) (no line limit here)*

Some of the main forms of economic, employment and parenting / social services support for families with children are listed below. However, the list is selective.

**Universal Credit.** A new cash benefit and in-work tax credit for those on low incomes who may be not in employment or in employment. Universal Credit was introduced in 2013, and has gradually over several years replaced six means-tested benefits which separately provided support for those on low incomes and unable to work, those with health and disability support needs, those with housing costs support needs and low earning parents. The amount is calculated on family circumstances, income, savings, housing costs, childcare costs and disability status. There is a five-week delay in receiving the first payment due to processing claims. Claimants are subject to 'employment conditions' and can have some of their benefit reduced if they do not fulfil these (e.g. for job search, entering employment or increasing working hours).

**Child Benefit.** Monthly flat-rate benefit for families with dependent children (children aged 0-16, can be extended to children aged 17-19 if in full-time education). Families receive £21.15 a week for their eldest child and £14 a week for subsequent children. Since 2012, the benefit is no longer universal. Family households with incomes over £50,000pa need to submit an annual tax return and are required to pay back (pay a fee) some of their child benefit. Once family household incomes reach £60,000pa, the charge recoups the full cost of child benefit or families can opt to no longer receive child benefit. In addition, claimants in receipt of Universal Credit can only receive child benefit for their first two children.

**Other means-tested benefits.** Families with children on low incomes or in receipt of Universal Credit (and the former welfare benefits Universal Credit replaced) may be eligible for several means-tested benefits. Some of these benefits are targeted at parents with babies and infants such as Healthy Start food and milk vouchers and vitamins, maternity grants, school clothing grants and hardship support funds. New parents on certain benefits can receive a Sure Start Maternity Grant (£500 payment) to help with the costs of having a child. Scotland has introduced a suite of three means-tested benefits for new parents as part of its Best Start measures. This includes a Pregnancy and Baby payment (£606 for first child, £303 for subsequent children); an Early Learning payment (£252 for each child aged 2-3.5 in family) and a School Age payment (£252 for each child reaching school age). The Scottish payments replaced the Sure Start Maternity Grant in Scotland.

**Benefits in kind:** Pre-school and school age children receive free prescriptions for medicines, reduced optician and dental costs, and help with NHS healthcare costs. Young people can receive discounted public transport. Scotland provides free baby boxes to all new parents in Scotland. This provides a range of essential baby items such as bodysuits, baby mattress, bath towel, thermometer and play mats. Some Local Authorities in England and Wales also provide these. In England, all infant school children, and all children whose families are on certain means-tested benefits qualify for free school meals.

**Maternity leave and pay entitlements:** Statutory Maternity Leave can be taken for up to 52 weeks. Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) is paid for up to 39 weeks. The amount of SMP is 90% of average weekly earnings (before tax) for the first six weeks and £151.97 or 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is lower) for the next 33 weeks. These maternity leave and pay rights are dependent on achieving eligibility criteria including a minimum average weekly earnings threshold and having worked for an employer continuously for 26 weeks prior to taking leave. Similar entitlements are for new mothers who have adopted a child.

**Paternity leave and pay entitlements:** new fathers are entitled to up to two weeks paternity leave which must be taken in one block (e.g. as one or two weeks) before the child is 56 days old. The statutory weekly rate of Paternity Leave Pay is £151.97 or 90% of average weekly earnings (whichever is lower). Paternity leave entitlements are for fathers and partners of new mothers. Similar entitlements are for new fathers or partners who have adopted a child.

**Shared parental leave:** is for new parents having or adopting a child. Based on the maternity leave and pay entitlements above, parents can share 50 weeks of maternity leave and 37 weeks of maternity pay between them. Shared Parental Leave arrangements can be used to take leave in blocks separated by periods of work or in one block. Parents can choose to be off work together or to stagger the leave and pay.

**Maternity allowance:** Maternity allowance is an additional benefit which those who are employed or self-employed and on a low income but not eligible for statutory maternity pay may receive. Maternity allowance is provided for 39 weeks and can be claimed from the 26<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy. Those eligible must be employed but cannot get Statutory Maternity Pay; be self-employed or may have recently stopped working. In the 66 weeks before the baby is due to be born, claimants must have been employed or self-employed for at least 26 weeks; and earning (or classed as earning) £30 a week or more in at least 13 weeks. Depending on eligibility, the payment can be effected as follows: you could get either: £151.97 a week or 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is less) for 39 weeks; £27 a week for 39 weeks or £27 a week for 14 weeks.

**Parental leave entitlements:** Eligible employees can take unpaid parental leave to look after their child's welfare, for example to spend more time with their children, settle children into new childcare arrangements and spend more time with family, such as visiting grandparents. Parents are entitled to 18 weeks' leave for each child and adopted child, up to their 18th birthday, with a maximum of four weeks unpaid leave to be taken in one year. Additional qualifying criteria is parents must have been working for their employer for at least one year.

**Rights to request flexible working and rights to time off for family reasons:** Working parents have rights to request their employer provide them with flexible working arrangements. Working parents can request and take time off employment (e.g., less than one day) for child and family related reasons such as to attend antenatal appointments.

**Child maintenance service:** helps resident parents to calculate and collect child maintenance from non-resident parents.

**Childcare entitlements and help with childcare costs:** parents of two-year-olds in receipt of certain benefits (e.g., Universal Credit) or with a child with additional needs (e.g. in receipt of disability support) may be eligible for 570 hours of fully subsidised childcare and early education a year (15 hours a week, 38 weeks of the school year). All children aged three are entitled to 570 hours of fully subsidised early education or childcare (15 hours a week, 38 weeks of the school year). Working parents on household incomes below £100,000pa may be entitled to 1,140 hours of fully subsidised childcare for their children aged 3 and 4 years (30 hours a week, 38 weeks of the school year, although can be used flexibly too). The Universal Credit system (including the former tax credit system) also provides help with the costs of childcare for low income working parents. The UK government has also introduced 'tax-free childcare' which is a scheme where the government contributes £2 for every £8 paid into a saving accounts reserved for paying for childcare costs for a child under 12 (or under 17 if registered disabled). Childcare and early education provision can range from home-based child-minding services;

daycare centres, nurseries and nursery schools, school-based childcare, and holiday childcare schemes.

In Scotland, once children turn two years and if parents are on certain benefits or classified as in need, they may be entitled to 600 hours a year (around 16 hours a week) of fully subsidised childcare and early education. All three- and four-year-olds are also entitled to 600 hours a year of fully subsidised childcare and early education irrespective of parental income.

**Housing support and help with housing costs:** Low-income families and families with children in housing need may be eligible to apply for social housing or emergency temporary housing accommodation. Demand is high, quality is variable, and provision is limited though. Parents on a low income may be eligible for help with rental or mortgage costs through Housing Benefit, Local Housing Allowance or Universal Credit. Rates of income support for housing costs have been reduced in recent years and often are not provided at the full cost of rent or monthly mortgage payment. Families with children can receive reductions in Council Tax payments – a local tax all residents pay at variable rates across the UK. Many charities also provide housing support services and temporary accommodation.

**Disability support services and income support benefits.** Parents with a disability and/or children with a disability can receive support and services from Local Authorities. Many NGOs and charities also provide disability support services to parents, children and families. In addition, those impacted by disability can receive a range of means-tested (for low-income families and individuals) and generic disability benefits. These include Personal Independence Payments, Disability Living Allowance, Disability car parking pass and Disability vehicle tax exemption.

**Local Authority Children's Services:** In England and Wales, Local Authority children's services have key duties for family support and children's services in their areas. They are responsible for providing needs assessments and support services to children and families in need; providing child welfare and child protection services and interventions to children at risk of significant harm; overseeing the provision and level of childcare and early education services; and overseeing the provision and development of family and parenting support services. These services include services formerly known as children's social services and educational support services. Their responsibilities include key roles in overseeing and providing support services for disabled children, looked after children and adopted children. Services for young people can also fall within their remit or be part of a distinctive youth services team in the local authority. Local authority social workers and children's social care services can also provide targeted economic and welfare support for families and children in need such as discretionary housing support grants, school clothing grants or hardship funds.

**Family and parenting support services:** There is a wide range of statutory, voluntary sector and private sector family and parenting support services across the UK. These include universal and community-based services such as children's centres, family centres, and family hub centres (community based, centre-based, multi-agency service providers that provide a range of child development, child health, childcare, parenting education and family support services). They also include a range of targeted support services provided to families and children in need and experiencing specific conditions and circumstances. There is a vibrant voluntary sector providing a range of targeted and specialist support services to children, youth and families. In recent years, 'intensive family support' and 'whole family support' approaches and services have been a key focus of development.

*(iii) The types of funding involved such as state, charity vs private sector providers and in terms of the different professionals/practitioners*

Government funding is provided for all of the main forms of economic support listed above. Employers pay maternity, paternity and shared parental leave costs but recoup this from the government. Government provides local authorities with a budget for spending for children's services and the children's services workforce. Charity providers often receive some government funding although this can be on a time-specific basis and their costs for provision are often supplemented from their own funds and donations. Private sector or semi-private sector providers often receive funding from a range of sources including government and may charge services users a fee for service provision.

*(iv) Approaches to policy monitoring and evaluation and consideration of limitations*

There has been a major emphasis on evidence-based policy and practice in the last 20 years across the UK. Local Authorities operate complex data monitoring and service outcomes frameworks to monitor local needs, service provision and outcomes for children, young people and families. However, in England, the national policy framework in this respect has less extensive and prescriptive in recent years; and local authorities can vary significantly in their approach and investment in policy monitoring and evaluation. Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland in several respects have more extensive current frameworks for monitoring and evaluating policy strategies in terms of key child wellbeing, children's rights or child poverty reduction targets and outcomes.

*(v) Limitations in national and official data and statistics*

A significant range of high-quality data and statistics is reported on issues such as family household income, parental employment trends, family household composition, children's health and educational outcomes. However, there has also been a reduction in the range of

official statistics and policy targets routinely collated and published in relation to children and young people's wellbeing in England.

### **27.7 Critical academic commentary on current family support policy and provision**

*(i) What are the prominent policy and practice developments related to family support services from children's rights, social equality, and evidence-informed perspectives?*

In addition to the policy and practice developments reported above, an additional strand of developments across the UK has sought to promote evidence-informed policy and practice. Across the four nations of the UK, specialist institutes and centres promoting evidence-based and evidence-informed approaches to children's services, youth services, parenting and family support, and early intervention services have been established. This includes the Early Intervention Foundation and the What Works in Children's Social Care research centre. These bodies also take the lead on identifying research priorities and undertaking research in these areas. The respective lead government departments and ministries have pursued these agendas. There have also been specific funding streams and programmes introduced to promote social innovation and evidence-based practice in certain areas such as education support, parenting education and children's social care.

During the COVID-19 pandemic the UK government and devolved administrations introduced a range of public health, employment support and social support measures. These included school closures and the adoption of home-based education, increases in benefit levels, the furlough scheme for employees and additional funding for Local Authorities children's services. However, many supportive measures have been temporary and there is uncertainty currently about the longer-term policy approach.

*(ii) What are the pressing policy, practice and research challenges impeding developments?*

There are pressing policy, practice and research challenges related to the areas of children's services and family support. At the policy level, the lack of an overarching, progressive and ambitious policy strategy and framework in the English context is a significant challenge. Policies and reforms have been developed in relatively fragmented ways across government departments and with a focus on specific needs or discrete targeted measures. Alongside these problems, restricted and until recently reduced, central government spending on children and family support, and for local authorities, has reduced funding and provision for children and families in need and from disadvantaged groups and areas. In comparison, a more ambitious social justice, children's rights and parental support agenda has been pursued across the three devolved administrations.

Practice challenges include the pressures professionals are working under when seeking to support children and families in need and vulnerable situations. Professionals can face high demand for services and support combined with restricted levels of provision. Pressures for professionals and services often lead to high turnover of staff and high levels of vacancies, such as in children's social care. This then has a detrimental impact on stability of services and support for children, youth and families. Adequate access to training and professional development opportunities can also be a challenge.

*(iii) What are the pressing gaps in provision?*

There are significant gaps in social support and services for children, young people, and families in the UK. There are particular concerns about services under strain in the areas of early intervention, family support, disability support, educational and additional education needs support, housing support, mental health services and youth services. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in the range and depth of support needs among children, youth and parents. While the UK government and devolved administrations have put in place many temporary forms of additional support, ranging from increases in benefit levels, the furlough scheme for employees and additional funding for Local Authorities children's services – it will be vital to properly assess and respond to rising needs for social, employment and housing support that will arise when the temporary measures end, and the longer-term impacts of the pandemic on the labour market, services and communities are felt.

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## Appendix A: Trends and issues related to demography

### Section 1: Fertility and demographics

Scandinavian Group	Fertility		Families with Children	Population under 18		Population Retirement Age	
Norway	2010	1.95	2019- Out of 2 439 242 private households 599,878 have children ( 24.59%)	2010	25.5%	2010	14.9%
	2019	1.53		2018	23.8%	2019	17.2%
Sweden	2010	1.98	2015-2019: No. Of families with children in the aged 1-7 increased 2016-2017: No. Of families with children aged 8-9 increased before declining in 2018-2019. 2015-2019 There has been a decrease in families with children aged 10-17	2010	20.4%	2010	18.1 %
	2015	1.70		2019	21.1%	2019-	19.9 %

Central European Group	Fertility		Families with Children	Population under 18		Population Retirement Age	
Ireland	2010	2.05	Families with Children: Highest Proportion in Europe 2015 1996 1.85 2016 1.4	2010	27.3%	2010	11.2%
	2018	1.7		2019	27.1%	2019	14.1%
Uk	2010	1.92	One child: 2010 46.3 % 2019 43.7 % 2+ Children:	2010	24.1%	2010	16.3%
	2018	1.68		2019	23.4%	2019	18.4%

			2010	38.9 %				
			2019	41.2 %				
			3+ Children:					
			2010	14 %				
			2019	15.1%				
France	2010	2.03	One child:					
	2019	1.87	2010	24.8%	2010	16.6%		
			2019	24.2%	2019	20.1%		
			2016	44.8%				
			2+ Children:					
			2011	38.3%				
			2016	38.7 %				
			3+ Children:					
			2011	12.8%				
			2016	12.7%				
Austria	2010	1.44	<i>One child:</i>					
	2018	1.47	2010	22.9%	2010	20.9%	2010	17.6%
			2018	21.5%	2019	19.4%	2019	18.7%
			<i>2+ Children:</i>					
			2010	46%				
			2018	47 %				
			<i>3+ Children:</i>					
			2010	31.1%				
			2018	31.6%				
Germany	2010	1.39	<i>With Children</i>					
	2018	1.57	2010	18.8%	2010	20.7%		
			2019	18.4%	2019	21.5%		
			<i>One child:</i>					
			most					
			<i>2+ Children:</i>					
			next					
			<i>3+ Children:</i>					
			least					

Southern European Group	Fertility	Mean Age First Birth	Families with Children	Population under 18	Population Retirement Age
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Italy	2010	1.46	2015	30.8	Couples with Children 2010 36.5% 2019 31.6% One child: 2010 47.2% 2018 47.9 % 2+ Children: 2010 42.5% 2018 41.7% 3+ Children: 2010 10.3% 2018 20.4%	2010	19%	2010	20.4%	
	2018	1.29	2018	31.2		2019	18%	2019	22.8%	
Malta	2010	1.36	N/A		One child: 2010 41% 2019 64.8% 2+ Children: 2010 48.5% 2019 30.6% 3+ Children: 2010 10.5% 2019 4.6%	2010	21.9%	2010	14.9%	
	2018	1.23				2019	18.2%	2019	18.7%	
Portugal	2010		N/A		Household w Children: 2010 51.2% 2019 47.6% One child: 2010 30.1% 2019 28.0% 2+ Children: 2010 17.4% 2019 16.4 % 3+ Children: 2010 3.7% 2019 3.2 %	2010	20.7%	2010	18.3%	
	1.39					2019	19.1%	2019	21.8%	
	2018									
	1.42									
Spain	2010	1.37	N/A		One child: 2013 4.134,3 2019 4.210,7	2010	19.8	2010	16.8	
	2018	1.26				2019	19.7%	2019	19.4%	

2+ Children:  
 2013 3.266,9  
 2019 3.248,6  
 3+ Children:  
 2013 668,7  
 2019 668,7

Eastern Central European Group	Fertility Rate	Mean Age At first birth	Families with Children	Population under 18	Population Retirement Age			
Hungary	2010	2010	27.7	Households	2010	19.2%	2010	16.6%
	1.25	2018	28.2	w Children	2019	18.5%	2019	19.3%
	2019			1990	38.8			
	1.49			%				
				2016				
				25.9%				
				<i>One child:</i>				
				1990	37%			
				2016	39%			
				<i>2+ Children:</i>				
			1990					
			40.6%					
			2016	34.2				
			%					
Czech Republic	2010	N/A		<i>Two parents:</i>	2010	20.1%	2010	15.3%
	1.51			<i>One child:</i>	2019	20.3%	2019	19.6%
	2018			2017	41%			
	1.71			<i>2+ Children:</i>				
				2017	47%			
				Three Child				
				+				
				2017	11%			
				<i>One parent:</i>				
				<i>One child:</i>				
			2017	62%				
			<i>2+ Children:</i>					
			2017	38%				

Poland	2010	1.41	N/A	One child	2010	21.9%	2010	13.6%
	2015	1.32		Fam:	2019	20.1%	2019	17.1%
	2017	1.48		2010	546			
	2018	1.46		603				
				2014	383			
				586				
				Two Child				
				Fam:				
				2010	546			
				489				
				2014	405			
				357				
				Three Child				
				Fam:				
				2010	226			
				543				
				2014	167			
				755				
				Four Child				
				Fam:				
				2010	107			
				447				
				2014	74			
				465				
Slovenia	1.57	2010	N/A	One child	2010	19.2%	2010	16.5%
	1.61	2019		HH:	2019	19 %	2019	19.8%
				2010				
				4.3%				
				2015				
				3.7%				
				Two Child				
				HH:				
				2010				
				25.8%				
			2015					
			26.1%					
			Three Child					
			HH:					
			2010					
			7.1%					

Croatia	2010 1.55 2019 1.47	N/A	2015	6.1%	Two adults with children:	2010	21.1%	2010	17.8%
			2019	19.4 %		2019	20.6%		
			2010	21.3%					
			2015	21.3%					
			2010	1.55 %					
			2015	1.47 %					
			2010	1.8%					
			2019	1.7%					

East. European Group	Fertility		Mean Age First Birth		Families with Children	Population under 18		Population Retirement Age		
Bulgaria	2014	1.57	N/A		One child HH:	2010-18.7%	2010-18.2%			
	2019	1.58			63,3% 2011	2019-18.9%	2019-21.3%			
						Two Child HH:				
					32,4% 2011					
					Three Child HH:					
					4.3 % 2011					
Moldova	2014	1.82	2014	26.9	HH with	2014	21.7%	2014	18.7%	
	2019	1.77	2019	27.7	children	2020	19.7%	2020	21.4%	
						2014				
						35.2%				
					2019					
					31.6%					
					One child HH:					
					2010					
					55.9%					

				2015 47.1%				
				Two Child HH:				
				2010 34.38%				
				2015 39.5.1%				
				Three Child HH:				
				2010 9.8 %				
				2015 13.4 %				
Romania	2010 1.59	2010	N/A	N/A		2010 16.1%		
	2018 1.76	25.5				2019 18.5%		
		2018 26.7						

Baltic Group	Fertility		Families with Children	Population under 18		Population Retirement Age	
Latvia	2010 1.36		HH 2 Adults with Children	2010 20.6%		2010 18.1%	
			2015 19.7%	2019 20.5%		2019 20.3%	
	2011 a targeted natality support policy aimed at having a third child in the family was designed and has contributed to an increase in the fertility rate. After 2018-policy declined birth-rate declined		HH 1 Adult with Children				
			2010 6.3%				
			2015 4.8%				
			HH 3 or More Adults with Children				
			2010 8.6%				
			2012 7.9%				
	2019 1.61		One child 64%				
			Two children 28% Three children 7.6%				
Lithuania	2010 1.50		Families with children 42.1% of	2010 22.3%		2010 17.3%	

2018	1.63	all HH-shrank since 2001.	2019	20.0%	2019	19.8%
		HH 2 Adults with Children				
		2010 26%				
		2015 21%				
		HH 1 Adult with Children				
		2010 5.7%				
		2015 6.2%				
		HH 3 or More Adults with Children				
		2010 7.5%				
		2012 5.4%				
		One child				
		58.2 %, Two children 33.7%				
		Three and more children				
		8.1 % -				

West. Balkan Group	Fertility	Families with Children	Population under 18	Population Retirement Age
Bosnia & Herzegovina	2010	1.27	Since 2011 No. of HH without children has doubled	2020 18%
	2019	1.20		
		Married no children: 26.35%		2017 17%
		Cohabitation no Children: 0.89%		
		1 Child 352 679		
		2 Children 294 947		
		3 Children 72 557		

			4+ Children 19027				
Albania	2010	1.67	N/A	0-14		2011	15.5%
	2021	1.57		2011	21.6%		
				2019	17.2%		
Montenegro	2014	1.75	Married HH 78% Cohabitation HH 4%	2016	22.1%	2014	13.5%
	2019	1.8		2019	21.8%	2018	15.1%
North Macedonia	2010	1.56	HH with two children are the most frequent in Census 2002	2010	25.2%	2010	11.6%
	2018	1.42		2019	22.1%	2019	14.1%
Serbia	2010	1.40	No Eurostat data 2011 Census 48.9% HH= couples have children 13.7% Mothers with Children 3.6% Fathers with Children	2010	21%	2010	17%
	2018	1.49		2019	19.4%	2019	20.4%

## Section 2: Population migration, diversity

Scandinavian Group	Population Trends	Migration Patterns	Ethnic Minorities
Norway	Present: Immigrant/Immigrant born 18.2% 2013 n= 11 671 immigrant children below 15. Steady increase before drop in 2017 before large increase in 2018:	Immigration: 2010 11.37 % 2015 15.58 % 2010 18.28 %	Sami, Jews, Roma, Romani, Kvens, and Finns- no data on ethnicity-recognized as a problem for policy

	n= 88 912		
Sweden	Immigrants 2019 19.6%	Immigration: 2010 2019	14.7% 19.6%
			N/A

Central European Group	Population Trends	Migration Patterns	Ethnic Minorities
Ireland	White Irish 82%	Immigration: 2014 65 500 2020 85,400 (One third returning Irish, one third UK and EU & one third rest of world) Low HDI Immigration 2018 7, 119 (7% of immigrants) Emigration: 2014:75,000 2019: 54 900 2020: 56 000 (60% Irish)	0.7%- native ethnic group Irish Travellers. 11%: Non-Irish Nationals: other White background, non-Chinese Asian, Chinese, Mixed background, African, other Black background 2019 6000 asylum seekers & 1 600 children in housed direct provision, 1500 housed in emergency centers,
Uk	2001-2011 % of white British pop. Declined from 87.4% to 80.5%	Low HDI Immigration 2013 20 744 2014 16 421 2018 20 366	Asian British & Asian Other (7.5%) Black British or Black Other (3.3%) Mixed/Multiple (2.2%) Other (1%)
France	Foreign Pop: 7.1%	46.1 % Immigrants African 33.5 % Immigrants European 14.5% Immigrants Asian	Single women with children, precarious families, immigrant families & young people.
Austria	N/A	Immigration 2010 21 316 2015 113 100 2018 35 300	N/A

		2016-2018 sharp decline in immigrants from 3 <sup>rd</sup> world countries	
Germany	N/A	number of immigrants	N/A
		2013 692,713	
		2015 1,561,047	
		2018 893,886	
		Underage of 15	
		2013 100,435	
		2016 194,948	
		2018 135,622	
		Low HDI Immigration	
		2013 36,754	
		2015 216,316	
		2018 35,116	
		Underage of 15	
		2013 4,997	
		2015 41,417	
		2018 6,500	

Southern European Group	Population Trends	Migration Patterns	Ethnic Minorities
Italy	N/A	Total Immigration:	N/A
		2015 280,078	
		U15- 36,054	
		2018 332,324	
		U15- 44,965	
		Low HDI	
		2015 62,860	
		U15- 5,455	
		2017- 106,422	
		2018 84,919	
		U15- 7,374	

Malta	N/A	<p>Emigration (high):</p> <p>2013 4,778</p> <p>2018 9,342</p> <p>Total Immigration:</p> <p>2013 10,897</p> <p>2018: 26,444</p> <p>Low HDI Countries:</p> <p>2013 223</p> <p>2018 2,141</p>	N/A
Portugal	8% (4% children) Foreign Born (Low in comparison to other countries)	<p>Emigration (high):</p> <p>2017 38 273</p> <p>Total Immigration:</p> <p>2013 Adult: 17 554, Child: 2392</p> <p>2018 Adult: 43,170, Child: 5274</p> <p>Low HDI Countries:</p> <p>2013 Adult: 1895 Child: 304</p> <p>2018 Adult: 6224 Child: 750</p>	Cultural diversity e.g., Gypsy (in Portuguese context preferable to Roma). Forbidden by law to identify citizens based on their ethnicity. Estimate- 0.2-2%.
Spain	N/A	<p>Emigration</p> <p>2010 403.379</p> <p>2019 decline</p> <p>Total Immigration</p> <p>2013 280.772</p> <p>2018 643.684</p> <p>Low HDI Immigration</p> <p>2015 16.464</p> <p>2018 29.017</p> <p>Under 15 Fluctuation</p> <p>2013 2.932</p> <p>2015 2.799</p> <p>2016 2.928</p> <p>2017 3.361</p> <p>2018 3.936</p>	Roma people, Hispanic minorities of central America and south America, Arab minorities, and Eastern Europe minorities. Roma-70% less than 27 years of age.

Eastern Central European Group	Population Trends	Migration Patterns	Ethnic Minorities
Hungary	N/A	<p>Total Immigration:</p> <p>2013 Adult: 38 968, Child: 3025</p> <p>2018 Adult: 82 937, Child 4,311</p> <p>Low HDI Countries:</p> <p>2013 Adult: 428 Child: 36</p> <p>2018 Adult: 1 261 Child: 119</p>	<p>13 ethnic minorities recognized by law. 6.5% of pop. (2011 Census). Roma most marginalized 3.2% of pop.</p> <p>1990 2.24%</p> <p>2016 6.36%</p>
Czech Republic	2018-5.3% foreigners	Immigration increased only small proportion from non-EU countries-contributes to population growth	Roma
Poland	99.7% Polish Citizens  0.2 Foreigners	<p>Immigration:</p> <p>2010 155 131</p> <p>2013 220 311</p> <p>2015 218 147</p> <p>2017 309 353</p> <p>2018 214 083</p> <p>Emigration</p> <p>2010 218 126</p> <p>2013 276 446</p> <p>2018 189 794</p>	<p>9 national minorities: Belarusians, Czechs, Lithuanians, Germany, Armenians, Russians, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Jews, and 4 ethnic minorities: Karaims, Lemkos, Roma, Tatars. Kashubians</p>
Slovenia	N/A	N/A	N/A
Croatia	Croats: 90.4% of pop.	<p>Does not have a migration statistic of good quality.</p> <p>2018, 39,515 people emigrated 2018 26,029 immigration (33% Croation, 67% Foreign-40% from Bosnia and Herzegovina).</p>	<p>Serbs (4.4%), another regional ethnicity (4.4%), 0.8% unspecified.</p>

East. European Group	Population Trends	Migration Patterns	Ethnic Minorities
Bulgaria	N/A	Negative migration balance Emigrants 2013-19678 2018- 33225 Immigrants 2014- 18570 2018- 29559	5% Roma (vulnerable-low economic activity/ed. Attainment)
Moldova	2014 Censcus 75% Moldovan	Emigrants 2014- 123379 2018- 158142 Immigrants 2014- 98709 2018- 116385	7.0% - Romanians, Ukrainians – 6.6%, Gagauzians – 4.6%, Russians – 4.1%, Bulgarians -1.9%, Roma – 0.3%, and other ethnic groups constitute 0.5% of the population
Romania	Distribution of pop between rural and urban remains constant.  Foreign born increase 0.5% to 2% of total population. 2/3rds have aquired citizenship.	Immigrants often transition through Rom. On way to detination country. From 2017-2018 decrease in non EU registration by 33.12% and of beneficiaries of international protection by 45.10% Immigration 2013                    153646 2018                    172578 Child Immigrants Low HDI 2015                    240 2018                    919	The minority population is about 11%- 58.9% of which are Hungarian-29.8%-Roma-Ukrainians -Germans-Turks-Russian-Lipovans- Tatars, Serbs, Slovaks, Bulgarians, Croats, Greeks, Jews, Italians, Poles, Czechs and other minorities. Additionally, in Romania there are communities of Arabs, Afro-Romanians, Chinese, Vietnamese, Indians, Pakistanis,

Baltic Group	Population Trends	Migration Patterns	Ethnic Minorities
Latvia	Latvians 62.2%. Population is ethnically divided. Non-	Emigration and depopulation are considered major national problems. Immigration rates lower	Russians – 25.2%, Byelorussians – 3.2%, Ukrainians – 2,2%-The absolute number of all ethnic

	Latvian ethnicities without proven parental citizenship before 1940 should apply for citizenship holding a specific examination; in other cases ethnic minorities hold «alien» (non-citizen) status				groups is decreasing due to migration and low birth rate. Roma
Lithuania	Lithuanians 86.4 %	Emmigration 2018 32 206 2017 47 925 2016 50 333 2015 533		44	Poles – 5.7 per cent; Russians – 4.5 per cent; Belarusians – 1.5 per cent; Ukrainians – 1 per cent; and people of other ethnicities – 0.9 per cent.-garunteed access to ed and own language classes.
		Immigraton 2018 28914 2017 20368 2016 20162 2015 22130			

West. Balkans Group	Population Trends	Migration Patterns	Ethnic Minorities
Bosnia Herzegovina	Demographic challenges due to low birth rate and emigration  Bosniaks 50.1% Serbs 30.8%	Immigrants 2017 Federation of B&H: 19 098 Decrease of 2.8% since 2016 Republika Srpska: 8 740 Decrease of 29.8% since 2016 Brčko District: 683 Increase of 0.3% since 2016 Emigration Federation of B&H: 19 379	Croats 15.4% Others 3.7% Roma (marginalised)

		Decrease of 5.6% since 2016 Republika Srpska: 8 651 Decrease of 26% since 2016 Brčko District: 491 Decrease of 10.9% since 2016 49.6% of emigrants aged 20-39: F: 59.1% M: 40.9% Transitional country for emigrants to Europe.		
Albania	N/A	Emigration fluctuated increase of levels in 2019 (pol. Crises and earthquake). 2018- 35.8% of citizens from enlargement countries who were first-time asylum applicants in the EU-28, were Albanians Immigration 2014-24,740 2019-20,753	N/A	
Montenegro	Diverse multi-ethnic, and multi-confessional state. Montenegrins 44.98 % Serbs 28.73%	Immigrants Serbia 55, 560 Bosnia and Herzegovina 21, 849 Croatia 8 Kosovo 8137 Germany 6608	Bosniaks Albanians Muslims Croats	8.65% 4.91% 3.31% 0.97%
North Macedonia	Diverse multi-ethnic, and multi-confessional state.	Emigration influenced demographic trends. Young people comprise the majority of external and internal migrants, and they are changing the demographics	Albanian ¼ of population Turks, Roma, Serbs, Bosniaks & Vlachs	

	2000- 2/3rds Macedonian	of the country's regions by migrating from rural to urban areas and abroad.		
Serbia	Serbs 83.3%	In 2020, Serbia continues to be a country of transit for migrants and refugees arriving mostly from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Syria, and India.	Hungarians 3.5% Roma 2.1% Bosniaks 2% Others 9%	
		2008-2019 647,512 seek asylum		
		Extensive emigration. (brain drain)		

## Appendix B: Trends and issues related to family structures, parental roles and children's living arrangements

### Section 1 Household Composition

Scandinavian Group	Families with Children by type.	No. Of Marriages	No. Of Divorces	Lone Parents	Children in Care & Welfare Services
Norway	<i>Cohabiting:</i> 23% <i>Married:</i> 53.5% <i>Mother &amp; Step-parent:</i> 6% <i>Father &amp; Step-parent:</i> 3% Since 2009 around 300 same sex marriages a	Marriage rates in decline since 1970 while cohabitation has increased.	2018 4.3	Mothers 13% Fathers 3%	85, 413 total 2015 3.7 % 2019 3.8% Foster care: 11666 Institutions: 1154

	year (2009-0.5%).					
Sweden	N/A	Marriage in gradual decline 2010-2019.	Divorce rates remain relatively stable	Mothers: 2015 289991 2018 308236 Fathers: 2015 72043 2018 85 646	2015 391 2018 023	10 12

Central European Group	Families by type	No. Of Marriages	No. Of Divorces	Lone parents	Children in Care & Welfare Services
Ireland	1.2 households 70.2% = families. 47% couple-with-children. 17% lone-parent-with-children 6% cohabiting-couple-with-children. 2016-6034 same sex couples, 86% cohabitating, 14% married 10% with children (19% female HH, 3% Male HH). Cohabitation increased:	2019 4.1 Age of 1st Marriage (f): 33.6.	1999- 0.6 2018- 0.9 (fluctuated) Low crude divorce rate in Europe.	2016 18% of families 86% women.	Children in Care 2015 6,384 2021 5872 Foster care: 65% Relative Care: 26% Residential Care: 7% Specialized Care: 4% Other Care: 2% 2018 37,024 children referred to family support 18. 343 received service. *Move to early intervention and prevention since 2015

	2016: 12.5% of families.						
UK	79% HH = Couples 21% Lone parents Couple1- 2 Children HH: 2015 32% 2019 33% Couple 3+ Children HH: 2015 6% 2019 6% Marriage HH: 61% slight drop. Cohabitation. 16% slight increase. Same sex 0.1%	2010 2016	4.5 4.4	2010 2016	2.1 1.8	Lone parent HH 2015 64% 2019 62% Mother 90% Father 9%	3% of children involved with social care system. Total number of Looked after Children 2018 75 420  73% Foster care  13% Residential
France	Two adults with children 2010 24.6% 2015 23.3% Three adults with Children 2010 2.1% 2015 2.2% Same sex marriage recognized 10000 HH where child lives at least some of the time.	N/A		N/A		One adult with children 2010 33.9% 2015 35.2% 22% of all families of which Mothers-18.6% Fathers- 3.4% (2018-18%)	Children in Child Protection Care 20.1% Out of Home Care: 150,000 (50% Foster) Homebased Support 140000 (Difficult to measure but numbers rising)

Austria	Referred to data did not supply (Couples) Blended	2010	4.5	2010		2010	12.9%	In Care	
		2018	5.3	46.5%		2018	15%		2015 13
				2016	35.5%			2018 126	
								2018 13,325	
								Approx. 60% in institutions	
								Approx. 38%-40% in foster care	
								Home based support	
								2015 36,369	
								2018 36,255	
Germany	Married	2010	4.7	2010	49%	Mother		Child protection – number of children taken into care	
		2017	4.9	2017		2010	90%		2014 48,059
		2019	8189	Age of M. (f)	37.7%	2019	85.1%		2018 52,590
		2015	30.9			Father			
	Cohabitation	2010	701	2017	31.2	2010	151		
		2019	943			2019	185		

Southern European Group	Families by type	No. Of Marriages	No. Of Divorces	Lone parents	Children in Care & Welfare Services	
Italy	Couples with children	2010	3.7	2010	0.9	Institutions
		2018	3.2	2018	1.5	
	2015	33.9%	Mean Age at first marriage F:	Rate	2010	2016 12,603
	2019	31.6%				
	2015	8.3%	2010	30.3	2017	2010 14,370
	2019	9.3%	2018	32.4	47.9%	2016 14,012
	2015	7.1%	Recomposed families			
	2019	9.2%				

	No national data on same-sex couples with children because the Civil Unions Act does not recognize any legal bond between homosexual parents and their children									
Malta	HH with Children	2010		2011	0.1	2010	2.6%	Institutions		
	2015	34.3%	6.3	2018	0.7	2018	3.8%	2017	198	
	2018	33.3%	2018					2019	220	
	Two Adults One child		5.8					Out of Home Care		
	2015	34.3%						2010	216	
	2018	33.3%						2016	251	
	Two Adults 2 Children							Home-based support		
	2015	10.2%						2017		
	2018	8.8%						240		
	2019							232		
	Rate well below EU average									
	Cohabitation and SS unions recognised									
Portugal	Couple with children	2010	3.8	2010	2.6	Single Parent		Institutions		
	2019	38.8%	3.4	2019	2.0	2010		2010	8,219	
	2010	33.8%		2010		8.7%		2018	6118	
	2019			2017		11.1%		Specialized Institution		
				64.2%				2010	60	
								2018	97	
	Home based care									
								2010	553	
								2018	200	

Spain	One adult with Children	2010	3.6	2010	2.2	Mothers 81.1%	Other Foster care:	
		2018	3.5	2018	2.0		2017	630
	2010	2.7%					2018	617
	2015	3.7%					Foster Care	
	Couple with children			Rate			2010	58.30%
	2010	26.7%		2010	62%		2018	47.90%
	2015	26.9%		2018	57.2%		Home-based support	
	Three with Children						2017	266,614 families benefited from home-based support (32.25%)
	2010	13.3%						
	2015	11.5%						
Rapid increase in common law partnerships. & Diverse family types (orientation, intercultural, foster and kinship care step- families)								

Eastern Central European Group	Families by type.	Marriages	Divorces	Lone parents	Children in Care & Welfare Services	
Hungary	Households two adults & Children:	2010	Divorce rate:	1990	7.5%	Child Protection: 17,792 2010 20,876 2019
	2010	22.3 %	2018	2011	6.2%	
	2015	20.1 %	5.2	2015	5.2 %	
	Households three adults & Children:			2010		Institutions: 8,371 2010 7,072 2019 Out of Home Care: 12,416 2010
	2010	7.3 %		2018	36.5%	
	2015	5.7 %				

	Same Sex couples with child: 681 families.				15,526 2019
Czech Republic	2017 35% two-parent nuclear families. 9.4% two-parent families with other relatives. 16.8% solo-parent in nuclear families. 3.2% other solo-parent families. The strong link between marriage and fertility disappeared, and unmarried cohabitation became common, even with children	2010 4.5 2018 5.1	2010 3.1 2018 2.3	N/A	2020, the European Committee of Social Rights has found the Czech Republic responsible for large-scale and discriminatory institutionalization of children with disabilities and Romani children in early childhood care institutions. No's slowly decreasing Foster care is increasing 2012 15 527 2018 19 626i Home based support Insufficient prevention and intervention.
Poland	Diverse family forms including marriage based, cohabitation based, blended and same sex households. Lack of data same sex families	2010 6.0 2019 4.8	2010 1.6 2019 1.7	Estimated 20% of all families of which fathers account for 2.8% No's increasing	Institutional Care 2019 16, 668 Family Foster 2019 55492 Family Orphanages 2019 6027 Disabled & 2739 Orphans Diverse Care and Education Centers 2020 2,166
Slovenia	One child HH:	2010 3.2	2010 1.2	2010 27.6%	Home based Support no data

	4.3% 2010 3.7% 2015 Two Child HH: 25.8% 2010 26.1% 2015 Three Child HH: 7.1% 2010 6.1% 2015 2015- 17 out of 81 same sex families had children	2018 3.5	2018 1.1	2015 29.5%	Institutions (All types): 2010 834 2014 1064 Out of Home Care: 2010 824 2019 657
Croatia	2018 33% of all Households include children. Couples with children- 19.4%. Single adults with children 1.9% Other H.H with children 12.5%	2018- 19,900 (4.9 M. per 1000 head pop) 2010 5.0	2018- 6000 (1.5 D. per 1000 pop) 2010 1.2	Predominantly female 14.4%	Institutions: 2018 1 638 Out of Home Care: 2018- 2 276 Steadily growing since deinstitutionalization plan. Home based support: Financial Assistance

East. European Group	Families by type	No. Of Marriages	No. Of Divorces	Lone parents	Children in Care & Welfare Services
Bulgaria	One adult & Children 2010 2.7% 2015 3.0% Two adults a& Children 2010 18.8% 2015 19.5% No stats-same sex illegal Cohabitation not recognized but	2010 3.3 2018 4.1 Mean Age at First Marriage(F) 2010 26.6 2018 27.5	2010 1.5 2018 1.5 Divorce rate 2010 45.3% 2017 36.4%	Mothers 80%	Institutions Decreased by 90% Does not cover small scale institutions. /Family type accommodation? (10-12 children) All for children with disability closed down. 2010- 7,587 2019-495

	children have rights						Foster care 2012-1144 2019-1948
Moldova	Couple with Children 2014 47% 2019 63%% Other HH (several nuclei) 2014 46.6% 2019 29.1%	2014 9 2019 7.6	2014 3.9 2019 4	2014 6.4%% 2019 7.6%			Process of deinstitutionalization No of children in institutions halved between 2010 & 2012 2014 3909 2019 961 Move towards preventative intervention
Romania	Multigenerational families are still more frequent than in the rest of European countries because of economic factors and traditions Nuclear family slow and steady increase 1992 68.2% 2002 79.55% No data for same sex couples	2011 Census-over half of Romania's resident population aged 20 and over consisted of married people (61.1%) and one in five had never been married (21.5 %). 4.5% of the population aged 20 and over, said they live in a consensual union 2013-2017 decreasing	Divorced persons accounted for 5.4%. 2010 5.7 2018 7.4	Single father with children one in four of single parent families 25.3%			Institutions 10000 enter the system annually 6000 cannot be reintegrated 32% enter the system due to poverty, 25% due to neglect 19,236 institutionalized, with 1.51% adoptable 18,775 to foster care of which 14.43% adoptable 4816 to other families, 5.21% adoptable Forms of out of home care 2010 23103 2016 19832

marriage trend

Baltic Group	Families by type	No. Of Marriages	No. Of Divorces	Lone Parents	Children in Care & Welfare Services
Latvia	Out of Total Households	2010 4.4 2018 6.8	2010 2.4 2018 3.1	22.3% -Lone Parents Of which 4.3% are single fathers	Institutions 2017 276 (225 of them had some form of disability) Effort towards deinstitutionalization Foster Care: 2018 6438 Placement Type: 68% guardians 20% foster families, 12% long-term social care and rehabilitation institutions. Home based Support: Service is limited and available to high-risk families only.
	Couple with 1 Child	2010 7.5% 2019 7.2%			
	Couple with 2 Child	2010 4.3% 2019 5.9%			
	Couple with 3 Child	2010 7.5% 2019 7.2%			
	An adult with Children	2010 4% 2019 3.6%			
	Other HH with Children	2010 12.7% 2019 8.3%			
	No data same sex families				
Lithuania	HH Type: Spouses	2010 6.0 2018 7.0	2018 3.1	3.6 % according to 2011 census	No. of Institutions 2005 113 2018 92

Cohabitants 5%	No of Children in Institutions
With Children aged under 18 18.4%	2005 5 838 2018 2 667
Lone mothers or fathers with children 3.6%	Out of Home Care 2009 279 2016 460 2017 405
Others 20.8%	Foster Children 2014 5681 2018- 5249
Same sex couples are not registered	Home Based Supports Disabled children u7-Decreased 7-17. and children up to 17 increased 2018

West. Balkan Group	Families by type	No. Of Marriages	No. Of Divorces	Lone Parents	Children in Care & Welfare Services
Bosnia Herzegovina	HH Types: Married Couple with Children: 53.98% Cohabiting Couple with Children: 1.00% The right to family life is not recognized for Same-sex couples.	2010 19 541 2015 18 643 2019 19 911	Divorce Rate is increasing - rates differ in urban and rural areas.	Mother 12.35% Father 3.01%	Foster System (New-underdeveloped) 2019 19 Children Institutional Care prevalent. Services in community to support parents insufficient. Home based Support: PWD & Elderly Family solidarity main form of support.
Albania	Size of family in decline	2013 8.2	2014 1.5 2018 1.7	2011	HH with orphans and foster children

	Not allow same sex marriage	2018				Mothers	2017-2018
	Married with Children	7.9	Per 100	2014	17.8	6.5%	2.3% of children
	Married couples, single parents living with other family	56.2%		2018	21	Fathers	Institutions 2017-703 (62 with disabilities, 41 homes for victims of trafficking, 57 in centers of DV). No foster care system lack of capacity. Home based support -medical and health lack of capacity.
		14.8%				1.2%	
Montenegro	HH 3-5 Members:	2019		2019		Fathers	Children and youth living in institutions
	HH 2 Members:	5.7		1.4		3%	2010 156
	HH 1 Members:					Mothers	2018 166
	HH 6+ Members:						Children in out-of-home care such as foster care
	Law on same sex marriage adopted July 1 2021						2018 729
North Macedonia	Diverse ethnicities-lead to diverse family forms: Family Communities, Underage Marriage, Egalitarian	2010	6.9	2010	0.8	Mothers	Institutions house children without parental care, disabilities and upbringing and social problems. National Deinstitutionalization Strategy in developed Foster Care
		2018	6.5	2014	1.1	7% Fathers	
				2018	0.8	2%.	
						Lone parents not defined in policy or legislation.	

	modern family in city. Cohabitation is recognized-not same sex partnerships					2009	219	(Still lacks a clear framework for accreditation and, most importantly, quality control) Home based support- person with temporary or permanently reduced functional capacity
Serbia	Of total families 2017 One couple with children most numerous 48.9% No official data is available since same-sex-not permitted in law. Emigration causes separated families	Avg. Age 1 <sup>st</sup> Marriage (F) 31	2010 0.9 2018 1.9 2010 18.6% 2017 25.7%		2017 Mothers 13.7% Fathers 3.6%			Institutions: 1455 disabilities 603-no parent care 114-correctional homes Home based support no data
		2015 4.9 2018 5.1						

## Appendix C: Trends and issues related to socio-economic disadvantage and welfare

### Section 1: Poverty and unemployment

Scandinavian Group	Risk of Poverty/ Social Exclusion/ Deprivation	(Un)employment	Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage	Youth (15-24) UnEmp.	Disadvantaged groups
Norway	At risk of Poverty: 2010 11.2% 2018 12.9% Material Deprivation 2010 2% 2019 2% Poverty or Soc. Exclusion: 2010 14.9% 2018 16.2%	Unemployment: 2010 3.7% 2015 4.5% 2018 3.9% Employment: Gen. Pop. 66.7% Immigrants 60.2% Disability 40%	Unemployment rate M: 53% Unemployment rate F: 47%	N/A	Lone parents/migrant background/pensioners risk economic disadvantage. Increasing risk of income inequality.
Sweden	At risk of Poverty: 2010 9.8% 2018 7.7%	2010 8.6% 2019 6.8%	Unemployment rate M: 2010 7.7% 2018 6% Unemployment rate F: 2010 8.5%	2010 7.7% 2019 6%	Total employment ratio in 2014 was 43,5%. Native: 46.7% 1 <sup>st</sup> Gen Immigrant: 31.2% 2 <sup>nd</sup> Gen. immigrant: 37.2%

2019  
7.0%

Central European Group	Risk of Poverty/ Social Exclusion/ Deprivation	(Un)employment	Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage	Youth (15-24) UnEmp.	Disadvantaged groups
Ireland	<p>At risk of Poverty: 2016 16.8% 2018 14.8%</p> <p>Children at risk of Poverty: 2018 15.8% Prev. high: 18.9%</p> <p>Risk Soc. Exclusion Child. 2013 34.4% 2018 23.9%</p> <p>Deprivation Rate: 2012 9.9% 2018 4.9%</p>	<p>Unemployment rate: 2019: 5% 2012: 15.5%</p> <p>Much part time precarious work in that picture.</p>	<p>Unemployment rate M: 5.6% Unemployment rate F: 5.2% Employment Rate disabilities: 30%</p> <p>Children under 16 were at the highest risk (26.1). In work slightly higher risk of poverty (15.4) Home duties (13.4) Unemployed (10.9)</p> <p>Disability or illness (12.3)</p>	One third of total unemployment.	<p>Labour market discrimination: Travellers and non-Irish Black people.</p> <p>Means tested Working family Payment doubled between 2010 and 2019. And social security expenditure as a per cent of GNP fell from 15.1 per cent to 7.6 per cent</p>
UK	<p>At risk of Poverty: 2010 17.1%</p>	<p>Unemployment 2010 7.8% 2019 3.8%</p>	<p>Sector, gender, ethnicity and pay dictate whether work will prevent poverty. Insecure,</p>	<p>14% 2020 Below EU Avg.</p>	<p>Rates of in-work poverty had particularly been on the</p>

	2018			temporary and			rise since
	18.9%			low paid forms of			2014/5.
	Child At risk			employment are a			
	of Poverty:			source of concern			
	2010			Employment Rate			
	19.2%			M			
	2018			2019 79.2			
	20.6%			Employment Rate			
	Material			F			
	Deprivation:			2019 71.1			
	2010			Employment Rate			
	4.8%			Disability			
	2018			2019 53.6%			
	4.6%			GPG			
	Child Material			2010 23.3			
	Deprivation:			2018 19.8			
	2010						
	7.3%						
	2018						
	7.1%						
France	At risk of	2014	12.7%	M & F: Equal	20.7%		One child in five
	Poverty:	2018	10.6%	Unemployment			lives below the
	2012			Rate			poverty line in
	14.1%						France
	2014			Foreign Pop:			
	13.3%			20%			
	2018						
	14.1%						
Austria	At risk of	2010	4.8%	Non-EU Migrant	2010	9.5%	Low level of ed
	Poverty:	2016	6%	Background	2019	8.5%	& Migrant
	2010	14.7	2018	Unemployment:			background -
	%		4.9%	2017			higher risk of
	2018	14.3		19.0%			unemployment.
	%			Highest			
	Children At			Unemployment:			
	risk of			Afghanistan,			
	Poverty:			Syria, and Iraq:			
	2010			48.3%.			
	22.4%						
	2018						
	21.6%						

	Deprivation Rate:				
	2015				
	3.6%				
	2018				
	2.8%				
	Deprivation Rate of children:				
	2010	5.6			
	%				
	2018				
	3.6%				
	Poverty & Social Exclusion children:				
	2010				
	22.4%				
	2018				
	21.6%				
Germany	At risk of Poverty:	Unemployment rates	Male Employment Rate:	N/A	Migrants have lower employment rates
	2010	2010 7.0%	2019		
	15.6	2019 3.2%	65.1%		
	%		Female Employment Rate:		
	2019		2019		
	14.8		55%		
	%				
	Children At risk of Poverty:				
	2010	17.5			
	2019	12.2			
	Deprivation Rate:				
	2010	4.5			
	2019	3.1			
	Deprivation rates of Children:				

2010 5.2  
 2019 2.7  
 At risk of poverty or social exclusion rates  
 Children  
 2010 21.7  
 2019 17.3

Southern European Group	Risk of Poverty/Social Exclusion/Deprivation	(Un)employment	Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage	Youth (15-24) UnEmp.	Disadvantaged groups
Italy	At risk of Poverty or social exclusion: 2010 18.7% 2018 20.3% Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion: 2010 29.5% 2018 30.6% Deprivation rate: 2010 7.4% 2018 8.5%	Unemployment rate: 2010 8.4% 2016 11.7% 2018 10.6% Employment 2010 56.8% 2018 56.8%	N/A	N/A	Poor families varied across regional areas most prevalent in south, then north, then centre

	Child Deprivation rate:					
	2010	8.6%				
	2016	12.4%				
	2018	8.1%				
Malta	At risk of Poverty Rate: slow increase	Unemployment: 2010 6.8% 2019 3.4%	Men Employment rate: 2010 72.5% 2019 82.3%	Women Employment rate: 2010 39.5% 2019 63.6%	N/A	Children from low-income families disadvantaged health, ed., employment, socialization, development. Two parent household-risk of poverty increase with number of children. Lone parents at highest risk of poverty 2019 (42.9%) Asylum seekers and immigrants, Children with disabilities. Addiction, DV, Orientation, ethnic minority
	2010	15.5 %				
	2018	17.1%				
	Children At risk of Poverty Rate					
	2010	26.7%				
	2018	22.8%				
	Deprivation Rate:					
	2010	6.5%				
	2019	3.7%				
	Child Deprivation Rate:					
	2010	7.7%				
	2019	4.8%				
Portugal	At risk of Poverty:	Employment rate: 2010 65.3% 2018 69.7%	Men Employment rate: 2010 60.7% 2019 60.5%	Women Employment rate:	Increasing Unemployment: 2010 16.1% 2018 20.1%	Gypsies are most impoverished.
	2010	17.9 %				
	2018	17.3 %				
	Unemployment:					

	Children at risk of poverty:	2010 2018	12.0% 7.0%	2010 2019	49.2% 50.8%	
	2010			Men		
	25.3%			Unemployment:		
	2018			2010	9.8 %	
	21.6%			2018	5.8 %	
	Deprivation Rate:			Women		
	2010			Unemployment:		
	9%			2010	11.9%	
	2018			2018	7.1 %	
	6%			Gender Pay Gap		
	Deprivation children:			2010	18%	
	2010			2018	14.5%	
	10.8%					
	2018					
	5.7%					
	Poverty & Social Exclusion Children:					
	2010					
	28.7 %					
	2018					
	21.9 %					
Spain	At risk of poverty rate:	Unemployment Rate		M & F: same pattern of employment		Those who are between 16 and 24 years of age have a lower employment rate.
	2010	2010	19.9%	Migrants at a disadvantage- those from Spanish speaking countries fare better.		Roma: 750,000, 10,000 of whom live in shacks. Poverty and exclusion affect more than 80%. 46% are considered extremely poor, and the child poverty rate stands at 89%.
	20.7%	2019	14.1%			
	2018	Employment Rate				
	21.5%	2010	58.8%			
	Children at risk of poverty rate:	2018	62.4%			
	2010					
	33.3%					
	2018					
	29.5%					

Material Deprivation Rate:		Income inequality decreasing
2010	7.4%	Welfare benefits claims decreasing
2018	6.5%	
Poverty. Or Soc. Exclusion:		
2010	32.5%	
2018	29.5%	

Eastern Central European Group	Risk of Poverty/ Social Exclusion/ Deprivation	(Un)employment	Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage	Youth (15-24) UnEmp.	Disadvantaged groups
Hungary	At risk of poverty: 2010 12.3 % 2018 12.8 % Children At risk of poverty: 2010 20.3% 2018 13.8% Deprivation Rate: 2010 21.6% 2018 10% Deprivation rate of children: 2010 28.8 % 2018 15.2 % Pov. & Social Exclusion: 2010 21.6% 2018 10% Pov. & Social Exclusion children: 2010 28.8 %	Employment rate: 2010 59.9% 2019 75.3% Unemployment: 2010 11.2% 2019 3.4%	GPG 2010 10.9% 2019 15.5%	N/A	Roma most disadvantaged - Concentration of risk factors e.g., low education, employment, large families. Roma children under the poverty line in 2012 estimated at 80%. Children and families with children in general, are at a higher-than-average risk. Especially lone-parent families and large families.

	2018	15.2 %				
Czech Republic	At risk of poverty: 2019-9	Risk of Pov. or social exclusion children 2019	Unemployed: 2010	Gender difference in the employment rate among the population aged 15-64 is one of the highest.	N/A	Roma at risk of low educational attainment/ segregation-being institutionalized
	Better than EU average.	2019 13.2%	Employed 2010	36% one income family.		Lone-parent families, and families with more children (more often Roma than majority families).
	Material deprivation: 2019-	2.8%	2018 74.8%	Largest GPG		
	Material deprivation for Children: 2019	3.4%				
Poland	At risk of poverty: 2010	17.6%	Unemployment: 2020	Gender pay gap	N/A	Rural Areas. People on Farms, Lone Parents Large families, poverty decreasing. Low tolerance for non-nationals, same sex
	2019	15.4%	2013			
			2010			
Slovenia	At risk of poverty: 2005	12.2%	Unemployment: 2010	Smaller gender gap.	N/A	Roma people, immigrants, young families, families facing multiple challenges, single-parent families, the elderly, precarious workers, families with children with special needs,
	2018	13.3%	2019			
	Poverty lower than EU 27 Average		Total Employment: 2010			
	Risk pov. or soc. Exclusion men: 14.8%		66.2%			
	Risk pov. or soc. Exclusion women: 15.3%		2018			
			71.1%			

Croatia	At risk of poverty: 2010 20.6% 2018 19.3% At risk of poverty - Children: 2010 19.6% 2018 19.7% Deprivation Rate: 2010 14.3% 2018 8.6% Deprivation rate children: 2010 14.8% 2018 7.6%	Unemployment: 2010 11.8% 2019 6.8%	N/A	Higher rates for youth up to 29 years	and same-sex couples Roma population is particularly vulnerable. Risk poverty higher for two parent household with three or more children (25.6%) one parent households (33.8%). Provides minimum income support
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Eastern European Group	Risk of Poverty/Social Exclusion/Deprivation	(Un)employment	Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage	Youth (15-24) UnEmp.	Disadvantaged groups
Bulgaria	At risk of poverty: 2010 20.7% 2018 22% Children at risk of pov. & soc. exclusion V high: 2010 49.8% 2018 33.7% 10% higher than EU average Deprivation Rate 2010 45.7% 2018 20.9%	Employment Rate 2011 58.4% 2019 70.1% Unemployment. Rate 2011 11.3% 2019 4.3%	Men Employment Rate: 2011 61.2% 2019 74.1% Unemployment. Rate: 2011 12.3% 2019 4.6% Women Employment Rate: 2011 38.8% 2019 36.5% Unemployment. Rate	2019 21.8%	Ethnic minorities; people living in poverty; unemployed; chronically ill people; people with disabilities; lone parents; families with three and more children; abandoned children and children in residential care;

	Deprivation Rate of Children: 2010 46.5% 2018 19.1%	Roma Unemployment: 50.2%	2011 10.1% 2019 3.9% GPG 2011 12.2% 2018 12.5%		victims of violence; refugees. Education is a strong predictor of people's opportunities in the labor market
Moldova	At risk of Poverty: 2015 9.6% At risk of poverty Children: 2015 11.5% Absolute Poverty 2014 29.5% 2019 25.2% Social and economic shortage is at a very high level (over 38% of the country's population).	Employment Rate 2014 43.8% 2019 40.1% Urban increase Rural Decrease Unemployment. Rate 2014 2.8% 2019 5.1% Urban decrease Rural Increase	Men Employment Rate 2014-49.9% 2019-44.2% Unemployment. Rate 2014-5.9 2019-5.8 Women Employment Rate 2014-38.8% 2019-36.5% Unemployment. Rate 2014-2.0 2019-4.4 Gender pay gap, Childcare provision an issue	2018 24%	40% lives at an income level lower than the average subsistence minimum. Families with children (lone parents in particular) People with disabilities & Roma particularly disadvantaged. 24% of Moldovan children live under the poverty line. Low education status and migrant background a risk for unemployment
Roumania	At risk of poverty: 2010 21.6% 2014 25.1% 2013 23.5% At risk of Pov. And Social exclusion 8.5 million	Data is for youth leaving protection system - almost 60% of young people have had at least three jobs the measure	PWD the most disadvantaged in labor market At risk of Pov. And Social exclusion- no significant difference between men and women- however highest	N/A	Children, the elderly, disabled persons, ex-convicts, lone parents, unemployed, and other low-income groups.

protection and to date. At the opposite pole, 9% of young people did not have a job, and 9% never worked due to a disability

incidence of poverty was experienced by children-1/3 below poverty line. Elderly also disadvantaged

Vulnerabilities of some single-parent families that have children and the lack of economical and material resources for poor families

Baltic Group	Risk of Poverty/ Social Exclusion/ Deprivation	(Un)employment	Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage	Youth (15-24) UnEmp.	Disadvantaged groups
Latvia	At risk of poverty: 2010 20.9% 2019 22.9% At risk of poverty or Soc. Exclusion: 2010 38.2% 2019 27.3%	Employment 2010 52% 2019 65% Unemployment 2010 19.5% 2019 6.3%	Employment rate M: 73.9% Employment rate F: 70.7%. GPG: 65% of university graduates are women, women with higher education earned 80% of average men's salaries	Has fallen substantially in recent years, from 36.2% in 2010 to 12.2% in 2018.	Special governmental support is given to Roma population, especially in education sector. Lone parents and large families most ARP. Free meals school children
Lithuania	At risk of poverty: 2010 20.5% 2018 22.9% Children at risk of poverty: 2010 19.9% 2018 11.1%	Employment: 2010 57.6% 2018 72.4% Unemployment: 2010 17.8% 2019 6.3%	N/A	N/A	Wide Range of cash transfers available for families from pregnancy, birth, adoption, military children.

Higher than EU Average Deprivation Rate:	2010 19.9%	2018 11.1%	Social Insurance recipients increasing.
Deprivation Rate of Children:	2010 20%	2018 10.1%	Free meals school children

Western Balkan Group	Risk of Poverty/Social Exclusion/Deprivation	(Un)employment	Patterns of economic and employment disadvantage	Youth (15-24) UnEmp.	Disadvantaged groups
Bosnia Herzegovina	Relative Poverty: 2015 16.5% Absolute Poverty: 2011 23% 2015 28% At risk of Poverty and Soc. Exclusion: 2018 58%	2018 18.4%	Male Employment: 54.2% Female Employment: 45.%% Informal economy 25.5% Labour market limited.	38.8%	Larger Households (20.2%) Roma, Migrants & People with disabilities, victims of violence. Social assistance is neither well-targeted nor needs-based oriented.
Albania	Poverty Rates 2012 39.1% 2020 37%	2016-2019 decrease followed by increase in 2020 2016 14.8% 2020 12.1%	2016 until 2019, there was a higher rate for male versus female. In 2020, the rate of	The 15-29 age group is more disadvantage in the labor market - employment has increased	Roma and Egyptians, LGBT persons, People with Disabilities, and Children & low

	At risk of poverty: 2017 23.7% 2020 37%		unemployment has slightly increased for females. The employment rate for women is nearly 10.7% lower.	consistently for this age group	level of education. people with disabilities, the elderly, victims of trafficking, and unaccompanied minors
Montenegro	At risk of poverty: 2013 25.2% 2017 23.6% At risk of poverty or Social Exclusion: 2013 37.3% 2017 23.6%	Employment: 2018 48.7% 2019 56% Unemployment: 2018 15.20% 2019 15.10%	Unemployment M: 2018 14.7% 2019 15.2% Unemployment F: 2018 15.7% 2019 15.1%	25.5%	No's on benefits no story. P.9-10
North Macedonia	At risk of poverty: 2010 27% 2018 21.9% At risk of poverty: or Soc Exclusion 2010 49.9% 2018 45.9%	Employment Rate 2010-43.5% 2018-51.7 % Unemployment. Rate 2019-17.5%	Despite legal changes, gender gaps and inequalities persist. 27%-point gap in Labour-force participation between women and men due to traditional gender division of work	Rate of youth unemployment over 50% until 2015 dropped to 45%	Roma, unemployed people, single-parent families, street children, & their parents; victims of family violence and homeless people,
Serbia	At risk of poverty:	Employment Rate 2015 5.2.1%	N/A	2019 27.5%	Households with dependent children and

2015	2019	58.8 %	elderly single-person households-Roma-those in rural areas Lowest poverty rate was recorded among males older than 65 (16.9%)-Highest males under 17 years of age (30.1%) Unemployed male persons were at the greatest risk of poverty (54.1%), followed by unemployed women (43.7%) Underdeveloped social services.
26.7%	Unemployment.		
2018	Rate		
24.3%	2019	10.4%	
Youth			
29.1%			
At risk of pov, or Soc. Exclusion:			
2015			
41.7%			
2018			
34.3%			
Social assistance was used by 3.7% of the total population. This is slightly over one half of 7.2% of the total population not able to meet basic needs in 2017.			

## Section 2: Patterns of educational disadvantage

Scandinavian Group	Percentage of completed tertiary education	Percentage of completed tertiary education by foreign born (migrants?)	Percentage of completed upper-secondary & post-secondary non-tertiary education	Percentage of completed upper-secondary & post-secondary non-tertiary education
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						tertiary education by foreign born			
Norway	N/A	Varies with country of origin-evidence of generational social mobility.				Varies with country of origin-evidence of generational social mobility.			
Sweden	2010	32.4%	2010	32.9%	2010	49%	2010	35.7%	
	2019	45.6%	2019	40.9%	2019	46.1%	2019	26.8%	

Central European Group	Educational Attainment	Education Disadvantage	Early School Leaving Rate & Disadvantage
Ireland	4th highest proportion of tertiary level attainment. 84% complete upper secondary/post-secondary nontertiary education.	Travellers, Roma most disadvantaged.	5% (5th lowest)
UK	N/A	Preschool access not equitable. Socioeconomic status is linked to education inequity.	N/A
France	N/A	Children with Disabilities & the 13% in priority education networks (disadvantaged)	N/A
Austria	N/A	N/A	N/A
Germany	N/A	N/A	2855 (2014 of migrant background)

Southern European Group	Educational Attainment	Educational Disadvantage	Early School Leaving Rate
Italy	N/A	N/A	N/A
Malta	Tertiary Level	N/A	Decline 2010-2019
	2010		
	2019	37.8%	

			Third highest early school leavers rate (16.7%) in the EU, after Iceland and Spain
			2010 23.8%
			2019 16.7%
Portugal	Tertiary Level	N/A	2010 28.3%
	2010 11.7%		2019 10.6%
	2019 19.6%		
	Upper Secondary, Post-secondary Level		
	2010 15.4%		
	2019 22.7%		
Spain	N/A	N/A	N/A

Eastern Central European Group	Educational Attainment	Educational Disadvantage	Early School Leaving Rate
Hungary	Tertiary Level: 2010 26.1% 2019 33.4%	N/A	2010 10.7% 2019 11.8%
Czech Republic	N/A	N/A	N/A
Poland	NA	N/A	N/A
Slovenia		Large inequalities in children's educational progress are linked to family background. The largest difference in performance is between immigrant and non-immigrant students.	N/A
Croatia	N/A	N/A	N/A

Eastern European Group	Educational Attainment	Educational Disadvantage	Early School Leaving
Bulgaria	Tertiary Level: 25.6 Tertiary Level Foreign Born: 5.4 Upper Secondary/Post-secondary: 52.3 Upper Secondary/Post-secondary: 38.7	N/A	Roma 21.8% Turks 7.5% Bulgaria 0.9%
Moldova	N/A	N/A	N/A
Roumania	N/A	N/A	2015 19.1% 2019 15.3% largest decrease in the 27 states of the European Union

Baltic Group	Educational Attainment	Educational Disadvantage	Early School Leaving
Latvia	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lithuania	N/A	N/A	2010 7.9% 2019 4.4% Lower than EU Average

Western Balkan Group	Educational Attainment	Educational Disadvantage	Early School Leaving
Bosnia Herzegovina	Pre-school enrolment increasing but lower than EU average. High educational Attainment 2009 7% 2018 10%	System is complex and fragmented due to localized competencies-lack of common standards. Skills mismatch prevents graduates entering Labour market. At primary and	N/A

			secondary school levels of enrollment in decline (birthrate and emigration). Roma children low participation in education from primary level (47%)
Albania	2020- Albania, participation in the upper secondary education is higher for boys than girls (99.3% vs 91.7%), whereas for higher education the rate is reversed (71.8% versus 48.7%)	N/A	2018- early school leaving rate in Albania was higher for men (18.3%) for young men than for young women (16.4%)
Montenegro	N/A	N/A	N/A
North Macedonia	N/A	N/A	mostly Roma ethnic group & poor families in rural and mountain regions
Serbia	Enrolment rate in secondary schools has been increasing (from 76.40% in 2005 to 81.58% in 2008),	N/A	Drop out at primary level most acute for Roma.

### Section 3: Housing

Scandinavian Group	Overcrowding and Inadequate Housing	Housing cost overburden rate	Housing Issues
Norway	OC Gen pop: 2010 5.3% 2018 6% OC Child: 2010 7.1 % 2018 5.1 %	9.1 % 2010 10.6% 2018	N/A
Sweden	OC Gen Pop:	Total Pop:	N/A

2010	16.4 %	2010	7.8 %
2018	16.7%	2018	8.3 %
OC Foreign Born:		Country Born:	
2010	32.1%	2010	7.8 %
2018	40.9%	2018	7.7 %
		Migrant Background:	
		2010	12.5 %
		2018	15%

Central European Group	Overcrowding rate and Inadequate Housing.	Housing cost overburden	Housing Issues
Ireland	N/A	Waiting list Soc. Housing: 68,693 Mortgage arrears: 81232.	Homelessness an issue 2019 9751
UK	N/A	Affordability has caused home ownership to drop: 70.5% to 63.1% High burden cost for low-income families.	Homelessness an issue 220 000
France	Forced cohabitation: 643,000	Deterioration and cost an issue	Homelessness an issue: 143 000
Austria	OC Rate: 2010 12% 2018 13.5%	2010 7.5% (Children-4%) 2018 6.8% (Children-7.3%)	N/A
Germany	2010 7.1% (Children 11.7%) 2018 7.4% (Children 9.4%)	2010 14.5% (Children 11.7%) 2018 14.2% (Children 9.4%)	N/A

Southern European Group	Overcrowding rate and Inadequate Housing		Housing cost overburden rate.		Housing Issues
Italy	2010	24.3% (Children 10.2%)	2010	7.7 % (Children 10.2%)	N/A
	2018	27.8% (Children 9.2%)	2018	8.2% (Children 9.2%)	
Malta	2010	4.0% (Children 6.4%)	2010	3.7%	N/A
	2018	3.4% (Children 4.7%)	2018	1.7%	
Portugal	2010	14.6%	2010	4.2%(Children-6.1%)	N/A
	2018	9.6%	2018	5.7%(Children-7.3%)	
Spain	2010	5% (Children7.5%)	2010	9.7% (Children 13.5%)	N/A
	2018	4.7% (Children 8.4%)	2018	8.9% (Children 10.9%)	

Eastern Central European Group	Overcrowding rate and Inadequate Housing		Housing cost overburden rate		Housing Issues
Hungary	2010	47.2% (Children 66.5%)	2010	11.3%	N/A
	2019	20.1% (Children 35.6%)	2018	9.3%	
Czech Republic	Overcrowding is an issue as is below standard housing.		Least affordable -contributes to social problems		N/A
Poland	No Housing/Poor Housing more acute in large cities (59.9%) vs small town (27.1%)		N/A		N/A
Slovenia	2010	34.9%	2010	4.3%	N/A
	2018	12.5%	2018	4.9%	
Croatia	2010	43.7%	2010	14.1%	N/A
	2018	39.3%	2018	5.1%	

East. European Group	Overcrowding rate and Inadequate Housing		Housing cost overburden rate		Housing Issues
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Bulgaria	2010	47.4% (Children 5.8%)	2010	5.9% (Children 5.8%)	N/A
	2018	41.6% (Children 17.2%)	2018	17.9% (Children 17.2%)	
Moldova	N/A		N/A		N/A
Roumania	2019	48.5%	N/A		N/A

Baltic Group	Overcrowding rate and Inadequate Housing		Housing cost overburden rate		Housing Issues
Latvia	2010	55.7% (Children 71.1%)	½ cannot afford quality housing		Lack of new development.
	2019	42.2% (Children 57.7%)			
Lithuania	2010	45.5%	2010	13.3%	N/A
	2018	22.8%	2018	6.7%	

West. Balkan Group	Overcrowding rate and Inadequate Housing		Housing cost overburden rate		Housing Issues
Bosnia Herzegovina	Post war-many have not returned to their homes-still live-in collective housing centers.		N/A		Roma people, people with disabilities, people leaving care.
Albania	N/A		Affordability is an issue.		N/A
Montenegro	N/A		N/A		N/A
North Macedonia	Poverty creates overcrowding issues for families-multiple generations		Poverty affects affordability		The cost of legalizing homes is way beyond what many Roma can afford, and the legal process far too daunting. It is a problem faced by almost 15% of the population.
Serbia	2015	53.4%	2015	33.7% (Children 37.4%)	N/A
	2018	53.3%			



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2018	31.3% (Children 35.1%)
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## Appendix D: List of policies/strategic documents that mention participation & realisation in practice by country

Balkans Group	Participation in Policy	Realisation in Practice
Serbia	<p>No mention of participation in policy list.</p> <p>Considers “inclusion” in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma (2016-2025)</i></li> <li>• <i>Strategy for Education Development</i></li> <li>• <i>Screening Report for Serbia for the Chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment)</i></li> <li>• <i>Action Plan for the EU Negotiations Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights)</i></li> </ul>	Very Low-no expansion on information.
Bosnia Herzegovina	<p>Certain laws in social protection mention that service users are equal in their participation in creating an individual plan of protection with the aim of their engagement and best interests.</p> <p>Youth law for the better involvement of youth in policymaking.</p>	NGOs advocate for families and children at a policy level.
Albania	<p><i>The National Cyber Security Strategy 2020-2025:</i> Parents and children participated in policy formation.</p> <p><i>The National Strategy for Children 2001-2005:</i> Promotes participation in decision-making. There is no information regarding the participation of children and families during the process of preparing the document. The document has been prepared by analysing international documents of interest, taking into consideration international studies, as well as the context of the Albanian care system.</p> <p><i>The National Action Plan for children 2012-2015</i></p> <p>The two main leading objectives for this plan have been to strengthen the institutional structures that monitor and report on the implementation of children’s rights in national and regional level, and the promotion of inclusive policies which take in consideration the protection and inclusion of children.</p> <p><i>The National Action Plan for Youth 2015-2020</i></p>	<p>In 2018-2019, UNICEF Albania, a strategic partner in collaboration with the government, carried out a study with a sample of 1000 children of 9-18 age and their parents, which aimed at taking descriptive data for internet use and also identifying negative experiences of children during internet navigation, such as online bullying, online violence and abuse.</p> <p>Also, there have been several awareness campaigns involving approximately 12.000</p>

	<p>Some of the main objectives of this plan are promoting youth in decision-making, and promoting employment, health, education, social protection. The preparation of the document went through several phases, one of which was holding several meetings on a national level with university students and youth representatives from youth organizations and civil society.</p> <p><i>Social Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2025</i>, representatives of civil society were included as contributors.</p> <p>National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians 2015-2020: included members of Roma and Egyptian communities as stakeholders and focus groups with Roma and Egyptians representatives; The methodology does not include families and children of Roma and Egyptians.</p> <p><i>National Justice for Children Strategy 2017-2020</i>: to promote and mentions children participating in administrative or civil court proceedings.</p>	<p>children of secondary schools, and most of the time children state that parents are not aware of the threats they face when using the internet (The National Authority for Electronic Certification and Cyber Security, 2019).</p>
<p>Montenegro</p>	<p><i>Strategy on the establishment of the right of the child 2019-2023</i> both are mentioned, but the focus is on children's participation in decision making and the processes central to children's rights, including a reform of the Council for children's rights and increase data sharing amongst NGOs to support implementation monitoring and analysis.</p> <p><i>The Strategy on the integration of persons with disabilities in Montenegro 2016-2020</i> - refers to parents and children's ability to be part of the society on equal terms and participate in social and economic life.</p> <p><i>Strategy on employment and development of human resources 2016-2020</i>- labour market participation of youth</p> <p><i>Strategy of prevention and protection of children from violence 2017-2021</i>: stresses the need for expansion of rights in child protection approaches, including their participation, and the participation of the public.</p> <p><i>Strategy for social inclusion of Roma and Egyptians 2016-2020</i> social inclusion-measures targeted at Roma youth-education</p> <p><i>Strategy of inclusive education 2019-2025</i> inclusive education especially children with disabilities.</p> <p><i>Strategy of early and preschool care and education 2016-2020</i> increase participation early childhood learning.</p>	<p>As youth are seen as one of the most important target groups, action plans for strategies state their participation on a yearly basis.</p>

*Strategy of development of the higher education in Montenegro 2016-2020; improving education to support social and labour market participation.*

North Macedonia

*The Participation of children and families is mentioned in:*

- Child protection Law 2015
- Law on elementary education 2019
- National strategy 2020-2025 and Action plan 2020-2022 for prevention and protection of children from violence
- National strategy for equalization of the rights of persons with disabilities 2010-2018
- National action plan for children rights 2012-2015
- Program for early learning and development 2014
- Annual program for development activity for children protection

Ombudsman protects rights and freedoms.

*Participation of young people and families:*

- Social protection Law 2019
- Social protection development program 2011-2021
- Program for realization of social protection for 2018
- National strategy for deinstitutionalization in Republic of Macedonia 2018-2027
- Action plan for employment of young people 2015 & 2016-2020
- Program for conditional cash transfers for secondary students for the academic year

*Participation of families in general:*

- Family law 2015
- Law on prevention and protection of domestic violence 2014, 2015
- Law on Health protection 2012, 2016
- Law on the Ombudsman 2018
- National health strategy in Republic of Macedonia 2020
- Strategy for Roma people in Republic of Macedonia 2017-2020

Latvia	Not mentioned	None
Lithuania	<p>States that participation is mentioned in the following provisions:</p> <p><i>Law on Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania:</i> states that its objective is to “provide an individual (family) with conditions to develop and strengthen their capabilities to solve their social problems, to maintain social relationships with society, as well as to help them overcome social exclusion.”</p> <p><i>Law on the Family Strengthening of the Republic of Lithuania</i> mentions that its social support and services for families “will guarantee families a help necessary to develop their capabilities to independently solve arising problems and will help strengthen possibilities for them to create a safe, healthy and sustainable environment in families.</p>	<p>There is no information or research about the extent of the participation of families and young people in implementation of these documents. Civic participation is low in Lithuania which is reflected in a low involvement of families in family policy formation.</p>

Eastern European Group	Participation in Policy	Realisation in Practice
Bulgaria	<p>Children’s and families’ participation has been explicitly stated in the following legislative documents:</p> <p><i>Child Protection Act (CPA) (2000)</i> a key concept underlying the CPA is that the child is a legal subject and not a passive object of the care of the state and society. According to Art. 15 of the CPA hearing the child in court proceedings is obligatory.</p> <p><i>National Strategy ‘Vision for Deinstitutionalization of Children in the Republic of Bulgaria’ (2010)</i>. Ensuring the child’s right to live with their parents is one of the priorities in the childcare reform implemented through the process of deinstitutionalisation. While implicitly upholding the concept that the family is the best environment for the child’s development, the CPA and other legislative documents contain no guidelines as regards developing parental skills or implementing family-oriented approach.</p> <p><i>The HealthCare Act (2014), National Health Strategy 2020, National Program for Improving Maternal and Child Health (2014-2020) and The Healthcare Act (last amended in 2016)</i> sets out the general provisions on the rights of children as patients and child healthcare.</p>	No data

*Pre-school and School Education Act (2016)*. This is the so-called inclusive education that concerns children with disabilities and with special needs. Parents' participation and student government have been regulated in this Act.

*National Program on Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection (2020)*. The following measures stated in the document include children's and citizens' participation: maintaining a national telephone line for children, providing special services for children; like Children's Advocacy Centres, organizing campaigns with renowned people to raise public consciousness and sensitivity toward domestic violence, etc.

Moldova

*The Law on Youth (2016)* regulates the principles and goals of youth policies and interventions, including participation.

*National Strategic Program in the field of demographic security of the Republic of Moldova (2011-2025)* - one of the Program implementation conditions is the full participation of relevant socio-economic groups.

*National Strategy for Youth Sector Development 2020 (GovMD, 2014a)* establishes participation as one of the four strategic areas.

*Law on Volunteering (No. 121 of 18.06.2010)* regulates the conditions for volunteer participation of individuals in volunteer activities.

A U-Report real-time social messaging tool was launched, enabling communication between young people and decision makers. It has engaged more than 20,000 users, making it the third-largest U-Report community in the ECARO region.

In 2019, data from the U-Report platform attests that more than 50% of the youth respondents confirm that both national and local authorities do not take their opinion seriously and do not report on it (U-Report, 2020).

Romania

- Law on the regulation of volunteer activities in Romania 2014
- Law on the organization and functioning of the Government and ministries 2001
- Law on state support for young people in rural areas 2002
- Law on prevention and combating social marginalization 2002
- Law on the insurance system unemployment and employment stimulation 2002

Participation has been facilitated indirectly through engagement of NGOs and associations.

- Law regarding the legal regime of the county foundations for youth and of the municipality of Bucharest and of the Foundation for Youth 2002
- Law on Apprenticeships at Work 2012
- The Youth Law the Decision of the Romanian Government regarding National strategy for social inclusion of young people leaving the child protection system 2006
- Law on the practice of pupils and students 2007
- Law on the establishment of information and counselling centres for youth 2006
- Law on the establishment, organization and functioning of the Romanian National Youth Council 2006
- Law on stimulating the enrolment of pupils and students 2007
- Labour Law 2003
- National Education Law 2011

Central Eastern European Group	Participation in Policy	Realisation in Practice
Czech Republic	<p><i>Action Plan for Implementation of National Strategy of Protection of Children Rights until 2018</i> included increasing the general awareness of children's rights among adults as well as children; and creation of opportunities for children and young people to participate in the decisions on matters that concern and influence them.</p> <p><i>National Strategy of the Prevention of Violence on Children 2008- 2018</i> considered children's interests by including their views in its formation.</p> <p><i>Strategy of Support of Youth 2013-2020</i>: The Strategy is the result of two years of work by experts in thematic working groups and extensive consultations in the form of round tables and a national conference on youth (November 2013), including active dialogue with young people within the Czech Council for Children and Youth project, "Let's do it"</p>	<p>Very Low-no expansion on information.</p> <p>In many policies while children and families may have been indirectly represented by NGOs involved in decision making, their participation is not explicitly mentioned.</p>

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	<p><i>Strategy of Education Policy of the CR until 2020</i> stated that all relevant actors (those who are in education, their parents, teachers and school management, founders, representatives of the public, non-profit, and business sectors) and the public were allowed to participate in formulating of the document with their suggestions and comments.</p> <p><i>Successive Strategies of Roma Integration (2000- 2020)</i>- supported public consultations to obtain professional, public, and Roma opinions on the objectives and form of the strategies.</p> <p><i>National Strategy of the Development of Social Services 2016-2020</i> supported the participation of service users through surveys.</p>	
Hungary	<p><i>National Social Inclusion Strategy (HNSIS) 2011-2020</i></p> <p><i>Children Strategy 2007-2030- the Decade of Roma Inclusion Programme Strategic Plan</i></p> <p><i>Let's Make Things Better for Our Children Strategy, 2007-2030</i></p> <p><i>Proposal for National Social Policy Strategy 2011</i></p> <p><i>Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy (HNSIS) 2030</i></p>	<p>In strategic documents concerning family policy and social inclusion, families and/or young people in Hungary are involved indirectly, via non-governmental organizations representing their interests. Among them, the Organization of Large Families and the Single Parent Club Foundation (as well as the main churches) have the largest influence, by participating and lobbying during the decision-making process concerning family policy.</p>
Poland	No mention of participation in policy provisions	
Slovenia	<p>National Youth Program (2013 - 2022) promotes the participation and representation of young people in the institutions and processes that shape their lives to encourage civic engagement</p> <p><i>Family Code 2017</i>: contains reference to the child's expert opinion in welfare proceedings and custody, and their right to counsel and representation.</p>	<p>The Child Observatory monitors the participation of the children. It is based on the values of participation (consistent consideration of the participation of children in all procedures.</p>

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	<p><i>The Programme for Children</i> mentions the participation of all children.</p>	<p>Research and evaluation is needed to explore how participation is realised in practice.</p>
Croatia	<p><i>National Strategy for Children's Rights in the Republic of Croatia 2014 – 2020</i>. Participation of children is mentioned in the document.</p> <p><i>National Strategy for Protection Against Violence in Families 2017- 2022</i>. Participation of youth and/or families is mentioned in the document.</p> <p><i>National Program for Youth 2014-2017</i>. Participation of youth (15-30 years) is mentioned in the document.</p> <p><i>National Program for Youth 2020-2024</i> (in progress). Participation of youth (15-30 years) is mentioned in the document.</p>	<p>Children's participation at the local level is achieved through the work of Children's Councils and Children's Forums. Councils (n=25) support the non-formal involvement of primary school children in the local community to encourage and develop collaboration as well as partnerships between children and local authorities. Meanwhile forums (n=70) are designed for younger children and their function is to raise awareness of their rights, and educate on peace, mutual understanding, and cooperation.</p> <p>According to the Ombudsperson for Children, obstacles to the realisation of these rights include a lack of awareness among adults about the importance of these rights, as well as inadequate investment in facilities and activities for children and youth.</p> <p>The institutional form of youth participation at the local level is achieved through Youth Advisory Boards that involves youth participation in decision</p>

making processes that emphasises partnership between youth and “adult” decision-makers. In this sense, Youth Advisory Boards participate at the political, economic and social levels

Southern European Group	Participation in Policy	Realisation in Practice
Italy	<p>There are four National Childhood Plans to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Childhood plan 2000-2001</li> <li>• National Childhood plan 2002-2004</li> <li>• Third National Childhood plan 2010-2011</li> <li>• Fourth National Childhood plan 2016</li> </ul>	<p>The participation of families and children is ensured indirectly through the fifty members that make up the Observatory, some of whom are associations that represent families and young adults, such as the National Association of Adoptive and Foster Care Families, the Association of Italian Catholic Guides and Scouts, and ARCI Ragazzi.</p> <p>The Forum of Family Associations was set up in order to promote and safeguard the values and rights of the Family and to recognise the family’s rights of citizenship.</p> <p>The participation of the children and adolescents is also ensured thanks to the presence in the Observatory of an appointed member of the Italian Authority for Children and Adolescents</p>

		<p>(AGIA), who in 2018 set up the Youth Council whose membership is drawn from lower-secondary and upper-secondary schools, Student Representative Bodies, scout groups, oratories, and sports federations and includes foreign unaccompanied minor.</p>
<p>Malta</p>	<p><i>National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024</i>: promotes children's and young people's social participation.</p> <p><i>National Strategic Policy for Positive Parenting 2016-2024</i>: contains provisions for the participation of children in the production of policy as supported by a dedicated taskforce for this policy and the Office of the Commissioner for Children.</p> <p><i>National Children's Policy (2017)</i>: Various policy actions are written with the aim of enhancing the meaningful active participation of children and adolescents in society as active citizens, rights bearers, and participants in the decision-making process.</p> <p><i>Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Strategy (2017)</i>: seeks the views of victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence about difficulties encountered when accessing the services</p> <p><i>The National Adoption Strategy for Children and their Families 2019-2022</i>: is based on the principles derived from the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and promotes children's active participation in this strategy, aim to consolidate and expand efforts to improve services for currently adopted children and their families, as well as prospective adoptive families and children. It is noted in the policy that the children's opinion is to be obtained in an age-appropriate manner during the adoption process.</p> <p><i>The Sustainable Communities, Housing for Tomorrow policy (2019)</i>: aims to providing social and affordable accommodation for vulnerable groups in society. The needs expressed by specific user groups are taken into</p>	<p>The National Adoption Strategy for Children and their Families (2019-2022):</p> <p>At a National Conference on Adoptions, adopted people and their families actively participated to help policymakers and practitioners in the field to better understand the challenges and the way forward. In service participation is being implemented in that the children's opinion is elicited.</p> <p>Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Strategy (2017): During implementation, victims and survivors voice out their concerns through the various NGOs but namely through SOAR. When the Commission visits the shelters there is also the opportunity for victims to speak to and update us on what is happening.</p>

account at the planning, design and implementation phase of this policy. The policy promotes service user participation from identification of needs, through to the design process, and post-implementation of the service, as well as in the monitoring stage of the policy .

*The Minor Protection (Alternative Care) Act (2019):* This law introduced the following: That the children will now be participating at each stage of the process and their interests will be represented by a Children’s Advocate; And they will be heard in a suitable and calm environment that offers them security, away from the courts.

*The National Inclusive Education Framework (2019):* Promotes the active participation of all learners in decision making and encourages a school-parent partnership in assessing learners’ needs

The Sustainable Communities, Housing for Tomorrow policy (2019) The participation of children is visible through the type of projects that the Sustainable Communities Board receives. Since 2019, a total of six projects, three of which include children, have been funded. These include a service to mothers suffering from mental health related issues where the NGO conducted research directly with children resulting in the service design in the programme to include children.

In a prisoner reintegration programme a systemic family approach will be used to assist children and partners in this programme.

Minor Protection (Alternative Care) Act 2019:

Child participation is implemented in each and every case that is brought before the Court, or before any one of the administrative Boards mentioned in the Act, as it is now mandatory for the Court to consider the child’s views before passing judgement. Competency is presumed and how children’s views

Portugal

*National system for Early Childhood Intervention Law* - participation is mentioned with a passive stance, i.e., they are expected to be involved but not explicitly mentioned how.

*Inclusive Education Law*: Parental involvement is explicitly stated throughout the document.

*Project ADELIA – Apoio à Parentalidade Positiva* - is focused on the promotion of positive parenting. One of its main axes explicitly stated the involvement of families and children.

*Program ESCOLHAS* aims to promote the social inclusion of children and youth from most vulnerable settings, and it is explicit in the regulation of the program that the target population (children and youth aged 6-25) should be involved in the actions.

*TEIP* is a government initiative implemented in schools located in economically and socially disadvantaged areas. In the formal deliberation the involvement of families and young people it is not explicit.

are considered is noted by the court. Moreover, all those involved in Child Protection shall also consider the child's views during their professional duties.

In early intervention there are regular meetings between local intervention teams and parents; and from these encounters, associations of parents have been established and are currently gaining some prominence in the community. As part of the inclusive education law, it is mandatory for any measure to take place that parents are involved and participate in the design of their child's adapted educational curricula.

3ADELIA is not being implemented nationwide; however, the involvement of families is implemented in the regions where the project is being developed. These involvements may take different forms, as a major aim of the project is the empowerment of families and parents alongside social innovation projects. In the social inclusion programmes, it is unclear how participation occurs as this depends on the methodology of the teams.

Spain	<p><i>National Strategic Plan for Childhood and Adolescence 2006–2010 &amp; 2013–2016</i> promotes the participation of children and families as its aim is to promote at national level the well-being of children and adolescents, taking into consideration their needs and interests in order to increase their quality of life, and foster the full development of their capabilities as active subjects of their rights.</p> <p><i>National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2013–2016</i> aims to provide a response to needs related to poverty and social exclusion. One way to do this is to support parents' participation in the labour market, and supporting child participation, with suggestions to support the inclusion of children in social, cultural, leisure, and civic activities, as well as establishing mechanisms to ensure their implication in decisions that affect their lives.</p> <p>At a regional level the <i>Plan for Children and Adolescents of La Rioja 2018–2021</i>. Has a human rights-based approach that establishes the strategies for this region in the area of children and adolescents.</p>	<p>All national and regional strategic plans have fully implemented the enrolment of stakeholders in their design and implementation as an indirect means to give voice to families and children.</p>
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Central European Group	Participation in Policy	Realisation in Practice
Ireland	<p><i>National Children's Strategy (2000)</i>: included the promotion and facilitation of children's participation and respect for their views in decisions and policies affecting them in both the public and private sphere</p> <p><i>Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (2014)</i>: refers to listening to and involving children and young people as one of six transformational goals</p> <p><i>First Five: A Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families (2019)</i>; Includes consideration of parent and child participation in policy formation and the participation of children in an ELC setting.</p> <p><i>National Youth Strategy (2015)</i> and <i>National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making (2015)</i> both consider the importance of the voice of the child in all matters that affect them that is bolstered by a <i>National Framework for the Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-Making (2020)</i>.</p> <p>The Child and Family Agency has produced policy to drive the participation of children and young people in line with</p>	<p>Policy has resulted in formal structures at national and local level, youth councils, with a strong stated commitment at Departmental level to consultation with children. Currently, the Department runs an online participation hub aimed at supporting participatory practice in all contexts involving children and young people.</p> <p>It can be stated with confidence that Ireland's Child and Family Agency made a significant commitment to children's</p>

their rights (*Child and Youth Participation Strategy 2019-2023*) and also promotes parental participation in protection and welfare services via a toolkit (*Parental Participation Toolkit, 2015*).

and young people's participation and undertook a major capacity building programme in children's participation between 2015 and 2018.

Consultations with children and young people have informed policy.

UK

*Every Child Matters* and *Children's Plans* documents involved extensive consultation with children, young people, and parents.

The *'Best Start in Life'* report also involved extensive consultation with parents and professional groups and promote children's, youth and parents' participation in the development of local services.

*Getting it right for every child (Scottish Government, 2021)*: The framework aims to support families and make sure children and young people 'get the right support, at the right time, from the right people'

*Every child, every chance: Tackling child poverty delivery plan 2018-2022 (Scottish Government, 2018)*: This plan sets out a series of policy actions which have subsequently been the focus of implementation and delivery actions in Scotland.

*Child Poverty Strategy Progress Report 2019 (Welsh Government, 2019)*

*Draft Children's Rights Scheme 2021 (Welsh Government, 2020)*: For several years the Welsh Government has been taking measures to embed a children's rights approach to social and family policies based on the principles laid out in the 1989 UNCRC.

*Families Matters (DHSSPS, 2009)*: This policy strategy continues to provide an important basis as a family and parenting support strategy for Northern Ireland.

*Northern Ireland's Children and Young People's Plan 2017-2020 (Department of Health, 2017)*: aims to promote collaboration and co-production in the planning, delivery and improvement of children's services and family support through inter-agency working, collaborative service frameworks and service user participation.

All of the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland strategies were informed by significant community consultation with children, young people, and families. These strategies have also been introduced and reviewed with participation forums and mechanisms in place to enable routine involvement of children and parents in policy decision making.

In the previous Labour government These include setting up local forums and participation frameworks for routine consultation about local service provision. It also includes involving children, young people and parents in specific schemes and initiatives such as developing training tools for professionals. Among the devolved administrations there are extensive examples of investment in, and development of,

		influential participation structures. For example, the Scottish Children's Parliament plays a major role in policy consultation and reviews.
France	Citizen participation in the definition of public policies is very poorly developed. Associations of professionals and family associations are consulted but cannot be said to be involved.	
Austria	No mention of participation in documents.	
Germany	<p><i>Family reports</i> (Familienberichte; every second parliamentary term; eight reports to date) on the situation of families, usually on a certain issue (e.g., time policy for families).</p> <p><i>Reports on the situation of young people and the achievements of the Child and Youth Services in Germany</i> (Kinder- und Jugendhilfebericht; 14 reports to date).</p> <p>- Report concerning the interdisciplinary and intermenstrual working group on the situation of children with psychiatrically ill parents and recommendations for optimizing service provision (commissioned by the German Bundestag; spring 2020)</p> <p><i>Survey of the German Youth Institute</i> (AIDA; "Growing up in Germany: Everyday Worlds"); continuous data source of the living conditions and the process of growing up of children and youth in the context of family as well as of day-care, school, and education</p>	<p>Not clear whether mentioned in documents but is considered a comprehensive principle, and is generally defined by German law, such as in the Youth Welfare Law (Eighth Book of the Social Code (SGB VIII) as well as in the UN-conventions of the rights of the child and in the UN-convention on the Rights of People with disabilities, both ratified by the Federal Republic of Germany.</p> <p>In order to optimize 'participation' for children and families, policy aims to reduce poverty. In terms of rights there are issues such as the right to contact the youth welfare office in all matters of education and development, the right to be involved in all public youth welfare decisions that affect them (depending on their level of development, e.g., appropriate advice of their rights in administrative</p>

procedures / family court / administrative court). Following the ratification of the UN-convention on the Rights of People with disabilities, nationwide barrier-free structures are currently implemented in order to foster self-determined participation (e.g., school assistants).

Scandinavian Group	Participation in Policy	Realisation in Practice
Norway	<p>White paper on the importance, value, and situation of the family-Yes</p> <p>White paper on the family welfare service 2019-Yes</p> <p>White paper on new child welfare act 2016-Yes</p> <p>White paper on the child welfare in Norway 2000-Yes</p> <p>White paper on the principle of filiation bond in the Child Welfare Service 2012-Yes</p> <p>White paper on cases where children have experienced violence, sexual abuse and neglect 2017-Yes</p> <p>White paper on better coordination of services for vulnerable children and Youths 2009-Yes, mostly indirectly</p> <p>White paper on childhood and life conditions for children and youths in Norway 2001-2002 Yes, thoroughly.</p> <p>White paper about child and youth protection 2001-2002-Yes</p> <p>White paper on integration policy 2012-2013-Yes</p> <p>White paper about prevention and combating domestic violence 2012-2013- Yes, but limited to labour market</p> <p>Long-term Programme 2002-2005-Yes</p> <p>Proposition to the Storting about changes in The Child Welfare Act (extended permission to impose in-home measures] 2014-2015-Yes</p>	<p>The main emphasis in most documents was child participation, with many documents referring to the Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child as a justification for their participation, as well as relevant Norwegian legislation, especially the Children’s Act (especially §31) and the Child Welfare Act (§§1-6 and 6-3).</p> <p>Several documents describe the increased focus on child participation during the last few years (not specified timeframe), with a strengthened child perspective in the legislation. They also stress the importance of child participation, with justifications such as “ideas, thoughts and suggestions can make important contributions to</p>

	<p>Proposition to the Storting about Child Welfare Reform 2016-2017-Yes, but mostly indirectly</p> <p>Proposition to the Storting about changes in The Child Welfare Act etc. (Better Legal Protection for Children and Parents) 2016-2017-Yes, much emphasized</p> <p>Proposition to the Storting about changes in The Child Welfare Act 2012-2013-Yes</p> <p>Proposition about parental responsibility, place of residence and contact with both parents after parents' separation 2008-2009- Yes</p> <p>Proposition about short- and long-term measures against domestic violence and child violence and abuse 2016-2017-2021- Yes, but to a little extent</p> <p>White paper about foster care 2015-2016-Yes</p> <p>Proposition about the 1996 Hague Convention 2014-2015 Yes, partly</p> <p>Proposition about a long-term plan to improve children and youth's mental health and living conditions 2018-2019-Yes</p> <p>White paper about public health 2014-2015-Yes, partly and mostly related to children's position</p>	<p>public decision-making processes" Children and youths expressing their opinions is also presented as an essential precondition for clarifying "the best interest of the child". Equality and participation (from both children and parents) are also described as core values in the Norwegian child welfare system (NOU 2000:12).</p> <p>Parents' participation is not as thoroughly described. The emphasis is on the importance of cooperation between parents and different agencies e.g., the child welfare system. Service user participation is a way to achieve this in many documents.</p>
Sweden	<p>Governmental report on the UN Convention on the rights of the child and Swedish law 2020- Yes, indirectly</p> <p>Proposition to incorporate the UN Convention on the rights of the child into Swedish law 2017 2018- Yes</p> <p>Governmental report on strengthening the children's rights perspective in sheltered housing 2017- Yes, thoroughly</p> <p>Final report concerning child welfare reforms 2017- Yes, thoroughly</p> <p>Governmental report on criminal law protection for children who witness crime between relatives, as well as encouragement for suicide 2019- Yes, thoroughly</p> <p>Governmental report on how to support young people's establishment in society 2018- Yes</p>	<p>In these documents, the focus was identifying the degree of participation of parents and/or youths, in forming suggestions, policies and strategies.</p> <p>Overall, there was a strong emphasis on children's right to express their view in matters concerning them, many referred to Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as relevant Swedish legislation such as the Care of Young Persons</p>

Governmental report on how to support young people's establishment in society 2017- Yes	(special provisions) Act and the Social Services Act.
Governmental report on compulsory measures used against children in psychiatric involuntary commitment 2017- Yes	The Ombudsman for Children plays a key role in ensuring the participation of children in governmental work. However, it was not always clear to what extent the ombudsman consulted children directly in the matter.
Governmental report on a new model for parental insurance which will increase equal parenting and enhance beneficial conditions for children 2017- Yes, indirectly	Parent's participation was less emphasized than children's participation. If they were included, it was mostly through organizations representing parents. However, in some cases with a broader interest in parenthood and family relations, there was a greater collection of parent's interests, experiences, and ideas
Governmental report on children's rights in criminal proceedings 2017- Yes, indirectly	
Governmental report which examines whether the child rights perspective has been strengthened by the custody reform from 2006- 2017- Yes	
Governmental report on strategies to protect and support children from human trafficking, exploitation, and sexual abuse 2015-2016- Yes	
Governmental report on the UN Convention on the rights of the child becoming Swedish law 2016- Yes, indirectly	
Governmental report on a collective strategy for alcohol, narcotics, doping and tobacco politics 2015- Yes, indirectly	
Proposition on a new form of placement in the Social Services Act for children and young people aged 16-20 2015- Yes, indirectly	
Proposition on how to ensure education for students staying at care homes or hospitals 2014- Yes, indirectly	
Governmental report on measures to ensure that all young people begin and complete a high school education 2016-Yes, thoroughly	
Governmental report on how to strengthen children's rights in compulsory treatment 2015- Yes, thoroughly	
Governmental report on the governmental support of sports movements for children and youths 2008- Yes	
Governmental report on advised legislation and strategies to further prevent violence in close relations 2014- Yes	
Proposition on legal changes to prevent migrant family separation 2009- Yes, indirectly	

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2013- Governmental report on strategies to strengthen children's rights and upbringing conditions in Sweden-

Yes, indirectly

Governmental report on how to strengthen children's cultural life-2006- Yes.

Governmental report on strengthen security against forced marriage and child marriage 2016- Yes, indirectly

Proposition on social support and the social services possibility to talk with children 2009- Yes, indirectly

Governmental report on inquiry into power, intersectionality, and structural discrimination 2006

Yes

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### Additional sources:

Eurostat 2020. [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Household\\_composition\\_statistics#Presence\\_and\\_number\\_of\\_children](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Household_composition_statistics#Presence_and_number_of_children). Accessed: 19/6/2021.

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