

Same-sex parenting support in Europe



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EuroFamNet is a pan-European family support network currently funded as a COST Action by the COST Association aimed to inform family policies and practices towards the ultimate goal of ensuring children's rights and families' well-being. EurofamNet is doing so by building collaborations between researchers, practitioners, policy-makers, children and families, public and private agencies, and general society.

The brief addresses future challenges for delivering family support focusing on the specific needs of same-sex families. As parenting traditionally has been modelled upon heteronormative family model, same-sex parenting challenges and revises established assumptions of parenting. Firstly, we look at approaches of including same-sex parenting in family support models across the EU in a comparative perspective.

This document is collected within the work of the/produced by EurofamNet **WG2 "Developing the European conceptual framework on family support"**. For further information visit: <https://eurofamnet.eu/working-groups/wg2>

Key messages

Family support to same-sex parents in European countries can be broadly divided into three groups – (1) countries where same-sex partners and parenting is equalized to marriage and heterosexual parenting, delivering similar public support, (2) countries with relative halting of recognition procedures (3) countries with pushback to same-sex parents' rights. Following areas are covered.

- ▶ **Same sex partnerships.** Here movement to marriage equality can be observed in the first groups and legal rather than political solutions dominate in protecting same-sex families.
- ▶ **Adoption rights.** Step- parent and joint adoption rights go along marriage equality trends.
- ▶ **Access to IVF treatment.** While some countries provide public funding for using the technological assistance and have adjusted same-sex parenting recognition through intent, most countries organize IVF treatment either as a procedure for single women or prohibit it, limiting second parent participation.
- ▶ **Surrogacy.** Most European prohibit this solution and it seems to provide the line where same-sex parenting solutions are not accepted.

Figure 1. Same-sex partnership regulation in European countries

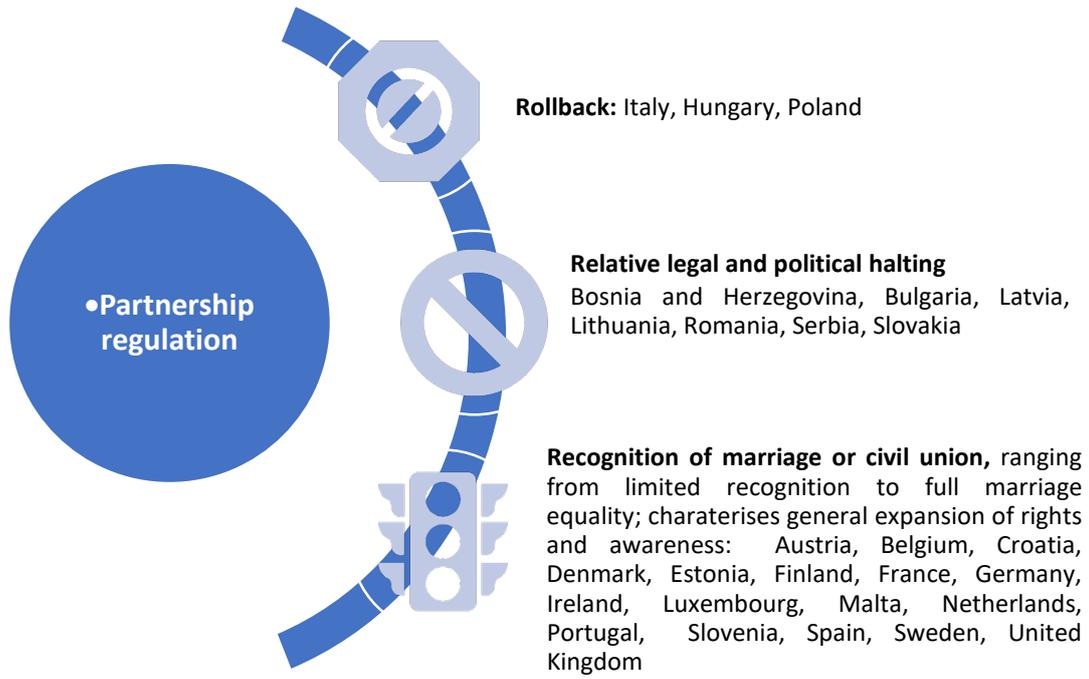


Figure 2. Surrogacy regulation in European countries

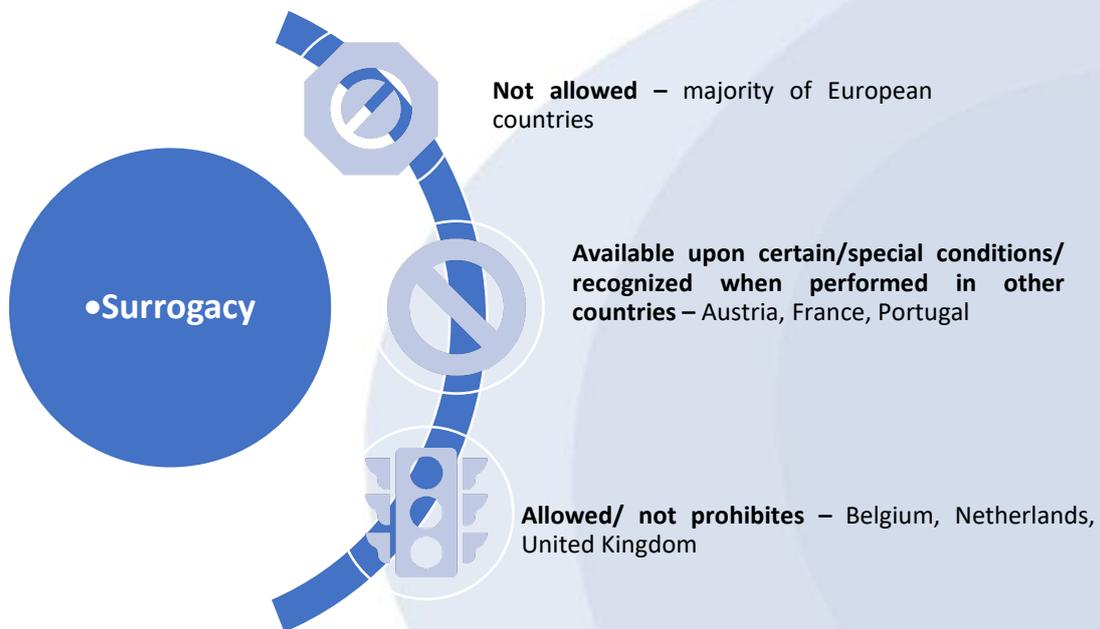


Figure 3. Adoption regulation in European countries

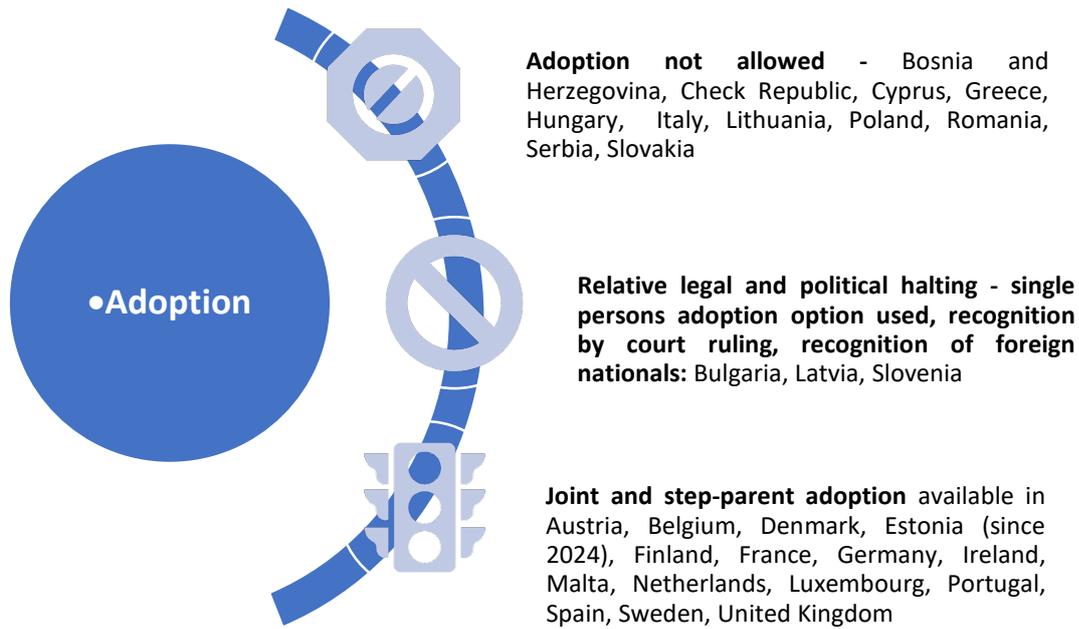
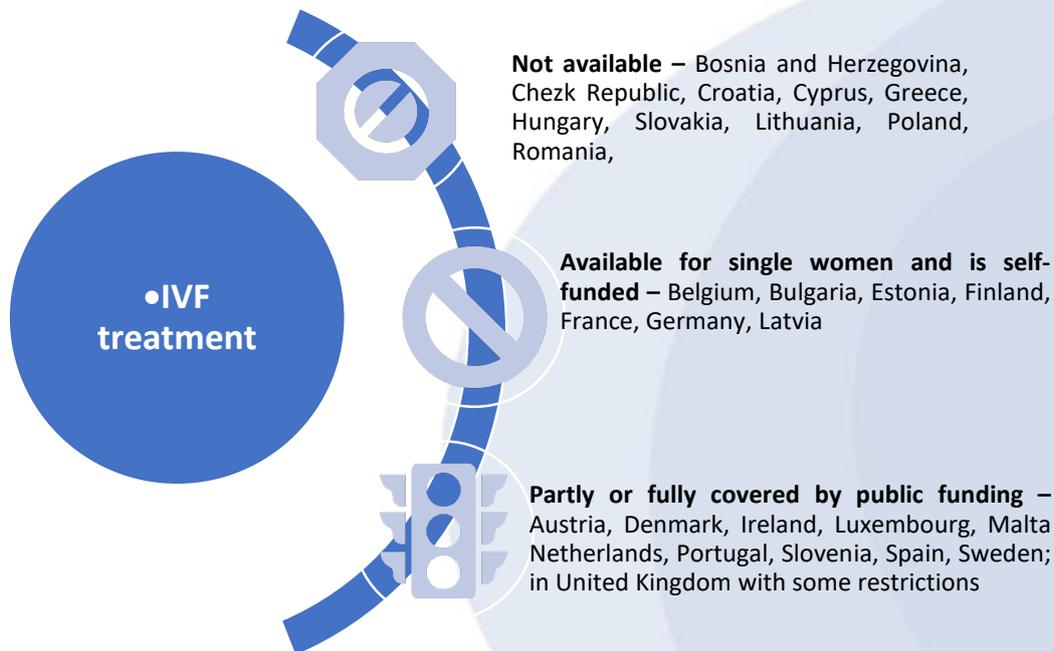


Figure 4. Availability and funding of IVF treatment in European countries



Based on Digoix, M. (Ed.). (2020). *European Studies of Population 24* (Vols. Same-Sex Families and Legal Recognition in Europe). Springer Open and Eurofam collected data.

Implications and challenges

- ▶ **Uneven regulation of same sex partnerships** across the EU result in limitations to recognition of the families even those have been officially formed in one country.
- ▶ **Different solutions to adoption rights across Europe** threaten the position of children in same-sex families as well as recognition of parenting rights to the second parent.
- ▶ **While access to IVF treatment** is mostly limited by its private funding. Only a few countries take a proactive position recognizing IVF treatment as the means of creating a family for same-sex couples and incorporate support to the parents already during the process of pregnancy started through IVF procedure, recognizing intent rather than biological factors as the grounds for parenting.
- ▶ **Surrogacy** is the most problematic means for same-sex couples achieving parenthood. While adoption and IVF treatment do not pose ethical challenges in relation to other persons and have been accepted also among heterosexual couples, surrogacy requires policy discussion and creation of a unified position concerning opportunities and risks such as exploitation of women who volunteer as surrogate mothers.
- ▶ **Family support** to same sex couples across Europe is fragmented and takes the needs of parents into account selectively. Regulation and access to support is modelled upon the model of heterosexual parenting. While there is a clear pattern of division in attitudes to parenting support among European countries across lines from East to West and North to South, which could be explained by different social and political histories of the countries, there is evidence of backlash in countries in relation to same-sex parent rights.



Additional Resources

Devaney, C., Christiansen, Ø., Holzer, J., MacDonald, M., Matias, M., Piessens, A., Salamon, E., & Kealy, C. (2021). *The conceptualisation and delivery of family support in Europe: A review of academic literature*. EurofamNet.



More information

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