

# Pronatalist Family Policy, the Response of the Second Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union to European Demographic Challenges

Hungary is taking over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union at a time when the demographic challenges facing Europe have intensified significantly, when no EU country has enough children to support natural reproduction, when Europe is ageing and its population is shrinking. Globally, these three factors are leading to a steady decline in the economic potential and competitiveness of the European Union. The challenge of the demographic winter is a fact that must be given due attention at EU decision-making levels. The family is a priority for the majority of Europeans, and there is a strong need to support it; Europe's citizens believe to tackle the demographic challenges and depopulation by strengthening families, not by encouraging migration. Hungary, as it did in 2011, during its first Presidency, considers it likewise important in 2024 to give priority to encouraging the birth of European children in order to meet the demographic challenges.

## Introduction

On 1 July 2023, the Spanish–Belgian–Hungarian Presidency trio began its work within the framework of the European Union's institutional system, ensuring for a second time that the three Member States will hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union for consecutive six-month terms. This will provide Hungary with the opportunity to have a meaningful influence on the renewal of the functioning of European processes and decision-making starting 1 July 2024, following the European Parliament elections, at a politically sensitive time in the renewal of the European institutional system. In this context, the questions of the establishment of the European Commission and the definition of the portfolio of each Commissioner will have a direct bearing on the future of Europe's response to the demographic challenges. As Europe is facing the threat of a demographic winter, policies based on traditional values of demographic policy-making and policies to encourage migration are being challenged. In the midst of these debates, Hungary is ready to draw the attention of decision-makers once again to the fact that more than two thirds of the population of EU Member States see the solution to the EU's demographic challenges not in forced migration but in supporting families.

The European Union and its Member States need to increase their resilience and strengthen their strategic autonomy as a community in relation to the other major players in the world economy. To increase resilience, following the adoption of the presidential

trio's programme,<sup>1</sup> the three countries committed to promoting this by strengthening Europe's social dimension, including addressing the demographic challenge the EU is facing. In this context, particular attention will be paid to exploring ways to address this challenge.<sup>2</sup> This type of approach in itself highlights that Europe has not one but several solutions to address the challenges of ageing and depopulation. This provides a good basis for the more detailed Hungarian Presidency Programme and the processes launched under it to place a strong emphasis on addressing demographic challenges in a meaningful way, building also on the successes of the Hungarian family policy system.<sup>3</sup>

## **The evolution of family policy as a governmental policy**

### *The historical development of family policy as a governmental policy in Hungary*

When we talk about family policy in Europe today, we find, not surprisingly, a clash of diverse and fundamentally different approaches across the European Union. What we mean by this policy is therefore a complex question.

At the time of Hungary's first EU Presidency, an independent interpretation of the need to comprehensively address and heal the damage caused to families by the long-lasting economic crisis that erupted in 2008 had not yet been crystallised and placed at the centre of long-term national objectives. Nevertheless, the 2011 Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union immediately made the possible demographic impact of reconciling work and family life an important task.<sup>4</sup>

But before our second Presidency, the foundation upon which we must build to renew European public thinking and the attitudes of decision-makers in the European institutional system is very clear. From the Hungarian perspective, the basic principles of Hungarian family and population policy provide the necessary starting point for the analysis of demographic issues undertaken in the Presidency's programme.

In our country, a clearly identifiable evolutionary process started in 2010, separating social policy based on the principle of need and the principle of assistance from the policy of family support. This process was based on the principle that family support is not a matter of social policy, of financial cohesion, of preventing disadvantage, marginalisation and poverty.<sup>5</sup> Family policy in Hungary means the comprehensive protection and support of the family as the smallest building block of society. Since the main aim of family policy is to promote the internal stability of families, protect their autonomy, increase their security, encourage childbearing, support child-rearing, strengthen the link with the world of employment and promote intergenerational

<sup>1</sup> Council of the European Union 2023a: 2.

<sup>2</sup> Council of the European Union 2023a: 7.

<sup>3</sup> NOVÁK et al. 2017; NOVÁK–FÜRÉSZ 2020; AGÓCS et al. 2019: 3–11; ENGLER–PÁRI 2022: 11–34.

<sup>4</sup> Priorities of the Hungarian EU Presidency 2011.

<sup>5</sup> NOVÁK–FÜRÉSZ 2021: 85.

cooperation, family policy is only effective if it is stable, complex, targeted and flexible,<sup>6</sup> and therefore as a social policy approach it cannot be effective. The family policy approach became a sub-system of government policy with its own objectives and was definitively separated from social policy when it became sufficiently clear that the most important objective of family support systems and policies is not a mere social transfer, but the free and uncoerced choice of people to start a family, to have children and to raise children.<sup>7</sup> In the light of this, family policy in Hungary formally became a renewed and independent policy and sector between 2014 and 2018, with an independent state secretariat.<sup>8</sup> As a result, family-centred governance, which not only provided resources but also renewed the social environment that determined the living conditions of families in a significant way, has achieved a family-friendly attitude that is now visible not only in the operation and functioning of the state, but in a much broader context. It is clearly visible in the areas of local government, socio-economic organisations, churches and the media, and in society as a whole. This does not mean, of course, that domestic family policy does not necessarily take into account disadvantaged families and does not have a very significant poverty prevention role, but both its principles and its scope go far beyond this function.

*Changes in the conceptual and institutional framework of family policy  
in the European Union*

When considering EU policy-making and action in the area of family policy, it is important to highlight the issue of national competence and sovereignty. The development of the European Union is characterised by an increase in EU competences and a strengthening of the supranational level. This trend is also generally true in the field of social policy. In case of social policy, although the EU's dominant competences were primarily related to the common market, employment policy, labour law regulation, and various aspects of workplace safety and reconciliation of interests,<sup>9</sup> the operation and financing of the social policy institutional system in the narrow sense remained clearly within the competence of member states. It is therefore also worth bearing in mind that the maintenance and operation of welfare systems, their institutions and services, and in this context family policy in the narrower sense, have remained a national competence, i.e. the principle of subsidiarity continues to apply in most areas of family policy in the EU system of division of competences.<sup>10</sup> Member States insist that social policy, and thus family policy, remains as such a matter of national competence.

<sup>6</sup> LAKNER 2012; NOVÁK-FŰRÉSZ 2021: 85.

<sup>7</sup> FARKAS 2012; NOVÁK-FŰRÉSZ 2021: 85.

<sup>8</sup> NOVÁK-FŰRÉSZ 2021: 83.

<sup>9</sup> GALLAI 2019: 25; GYULAVÁRI 2014.

<sup>10</sup> ANDERSON 2015: 4.

The European Union has a long history of pursuing objectives related to demography, income, parental employment and equal opportunities between women and men, while often implementing measures without a family policy framework.<sup>11</sup>

However, national decision-making on family policy is still limited and cannot be considered as full-fledged due to the expansion of EU powers and institutional action. To understand this apparent contradiction in the historical development of EU measures and regulations and policy-making, it is worth considering the following.

In the area of hard law on the coordination of family benefits, which is a family policy subject, the development of EU law is particularly important. The provisions guaranteeing the right of free movement of workers, for a long time exclusively in relation to intra-EU movement, were clearly necessary and forward-looking in order to protect the right of movement of workers and their families. Indeed, the implementation of the Treaty of Rome requires that the rights of family members of workers, both adults and children, to reside with the worker in another Member State and to have access to social protection benefits and services in that Member State be protected by national and EU law.<sup>12</sup>

The provisions on family benefits, which have been the subject of much controversy in the recent past, are governed by the EU Regulations on the coordination of social security systems to ensure free movement within the EU.<sup>13</sup> By introducing very specific coordination provisions requiring the cooperation of Member States' institutions, the Regulations also cover maternity and family benefits, if only because the obligation to coordinate family policy benefits is also enshrined in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.<sup>14</sup> However, these rules do not specify the specific benefits that national family policy rules should establish, but rather that the benefits provided by national rules should be available to people with the right of free movement on the same terms. The primary objective of the coordination regulations is therefore to ensure interoperability between Member States' systems. Mutual recognition of rights acquired in different countries and the taking into account of rights for the purpose of establishing benefits under national law are essential to enable national authorities to apply EU coordination rules correctly.

This regulation has posed serious challenges for the European Union in the recent years of increased mobility on both intra-EU migration and migration from third countries. Indeed, rules covering technical, individually well-understood rights have generated effects in practice that have escalated into political conflict at the highest levels during the previous decade. A good example of the sensitivity of the regulation, besides specific national attempts to the indexation of family benefits (e.g. Austria),<sup>15</sup> is that,

<sup>11</sup> JENSON 2021: 49.

<sup>12</sup> GELLÉRNÉ LUKÁCS 2018: 109–136.

<sup>13</sup> Regulations (EC) No 883/2004 and No 987/2009.

<sup>14</sup> Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Articles 18 and 45; Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the coordination of social security systems, Articles 4 and 67; Regulation (EU) No 492/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on freedom of movement for workers within the Union, Article 7.

<sup>15</sup> FÜRÉSZ–MOLNÁR 2023: 41.

more generally, the negative overall social perception of British benefits for foreigners (for children living abroad) can be identified as one of the ideological-political triggers of Brexit.<sup>16</sup> Another very significant challenge also stems from the fact that, based on the evolution of legal norms and court rulings, EU law now provides very broad protection for the rights of migrants from third countries, going far beyond the original approach to promoting employment described above.<sup>17</sup>

In the area of family policy, not only are there directly applicable regulations, but also directives. Directive regulations in the field of family policy, which fall within the scope of mandatory legislation, typically aim at preventing social exclusion, ensuring equal opportunities and equal treatment.<sup>18</sup> In the social field, the European Pillar of Social Rights, adopted at the Gothenburg Social Summit in 2017, is decisive, with one of its specific proposals being the creation of the directive on work–life balance, which also regulates the extent of maternity and paternity leave.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to regulatory instruments, there are also instruments in the area of soft law. The European Union, through its so-called open coordination mechanisms,<sup>20</sup> is also able to influence national policies in these areas, influencing them in order to help achieve the objectives set by the community of Member States.<sup>21</sup> This could be the case, for example, for guidelines in the annual country-specific recommendations that also affect economic governance.<sup>22</sup> For example, in case of Hungary, the 2023 recommendations included a proposal to abolish the measures on utility cost reduction, which would have a fundamental impact on government policies to support families.<sup>23</sup> In reality, therefore, EU intervention in national family policies cannot be completely ruled out, despite the fact that they are an exclusive national competence.<sup>24</sup>

It is therefore hard to argue that, although family policy is indeed an area of national competence, it is influenced directly and indirectly by EU regulation and policy-making on many fronts.

For this reason, it is perhaps not an outlandish idea that national interests in family policy can legitimately be reflected in EU policy-making and norm-setting processes. It is therefore also possible to take substantive action in these areas as a Presidency objective and impact directly influencing EU policy-making and legislation.

<sup>16</sup> GELLÉRNÉ LUKÁCS 2019: 179–193; GELLÉRNÉ LUKÁCS – DANI 2022: 67–78.

<sup>17</sup> FÜRÉSZ–MOLNÁR 2023: 41.

<sup>18</sup> GALLAI 2001.

<sup>19</sup> Directive 2019/1158/EC.

<sup>20</sup> Open Method of Coordination s. a.

<sup>21</sup> GALLAI 2019: 15–27; THÉVENON–NEYER 2014.

<sup>22</sup> BIRÓNÉ MALUSTYIK 2022: 279–308.

<sup>23</sup> Recommendation from the Council on Hungary's National Reform Programme 2023 and delivering its opinion on Hungary's Convergence Programme.

<sup>24</sup> GALLAI 2019: 25.

*Background on the scope for family policy action*

In answering the question of what the scope for such action is, it is worth considering the EU's policy development and environment.

While in Hungary family policy as an independent policy has been separated from social policy, the trends in the approach adopted in the EU institutions seem to be in the opposite direction to this development. As Jenson points out, while today family support is basically not on the agenda of policy-makers at all, this has not been the case in the EU for a long time.<sup>25</sup>

In 1974, the EU embarked on a path that had a direct impact on family policy with the launch of the Social Action Programme. The European Commission launched this Action Programme in the context of the drive for full employment, under which it developed a number of new directives,<sup>26</sup> and from the mid-1970s there was a major drive towards harmonisation of social legislation in certain areas. The launch of the Social Action Programme made it possible to implement a community social policy and social legislation that went beyond the provisions of the Treaty of Rome.<sup>27</sup> In fact, the EU institutional system used the opportunity provided by the relevant regulatory powers of the labour markets to do so. Amongst other objectives, the adoption of measures to achieve full employment has appeared, accompanied by the goal of achieving equality between women and men and “ensuring that the family responsibilities of all concerned are compatible with their workplace aspirations”.<sup>28</sup>

Given that the action of the European Union institutions has been limited to the field of employment, measures to reconcile work and family life have remained firmly focused on parental (usually maternal) employment. In the 1980s, however, the European Commission began to consider the possibility of developing an explicit family policy. The starting point for this was the demographic challenges, which were already clearly emerging as a threat to the functioning of labour markets and to the security of family incomes.<sup>29</sup>

The development of policy in the social fields covering family policy at community level thus appeared at the same time as the adoption of the legislation codifying social security coordination, when the European Parliament adopted its resolution on family policy in the EU in 1983.<sup>30</sup> In it, policy-makers proposed the coordination of Member States' family policies at community level, with family policy becoming “an integral part of all community policies”.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>25</sup> JENSON 2021: 49.

<sup>26</sup> Directive 75/129/EEC on collective redundancies; Directive 77/187/EEC on the protection of employees' acquired rights in the event of a change of employer; Directive 80/987/EEC on the protection of employees in the event of the insolvency of their employer.

<sup>27</sup> GYULAVÁRI 2003: 47.

<sup>28</sup> ROSS 2001: 188; JENSON 2021: 49.

<sup>29</sup> JENSON 2021: 50.

<sup>30</sup> European Commission 1989.

<sup>31</sup> HANTRAIS 1995: 80; JENSON 2021: 50.

The European Commission also followed in the footsteps of the European Parliament's 1983 decision in a 1989 communication. The document presented a comprehensive and ambitious analysis that "since children are becoming increasingly rare, Europe's demographic future depends on the family".<sup>32</sup> The document began with a description of "Europe's worrying demographic situation" and concluded with a description of "the family as the fundamental unit of society" and its important role in intergenerational solidarity. The communication called for EU-level support for childcare services as "a key element of family policy". The Communication aimed to provide Europe with a family policy framework for new and "workable" measures.

However, the Social Affairs Council, examining the Communication, took a more cautious approach to the Commission's initiative. As an EU objective, it narrowed the family policy issues related to child-rearing to the issue of 'reconciling' work and family life, i.e. it took its decisions only on a narrow interpretation of the EU's employment mandate. The Council agreed that the EU could take action on freedom of movement and equal opportunities, but in the area of family policy it saw that the EU's role could be limited to collecting and disseminating information. Therefore, within the framework of this mandate, and subject to the Commission's initiative, it agreed to the establishment of the European Observatory on Family Policies in 1989, but took no further action.<sup>33</sup> Overall, with this decision and the adoption of its 1992 recommendation on day care, the Council has caught up with the other institutions, each of which has taken an active part in the EU's policy-making process. These were followed by a number of further steps,<sup>34</sup> although they did not fundamentally affect the retention of family (social) policies within national competence.

Since no one could deny the demographic challenges, whose economic and social impact was already foreseeable, the Commission published several major demographic reports in the following years.<sup>35</sup> This was a cause for optimism. Four European Demographic Forums have been organised at the Commission's initiative since 2006 (2006, 2008, 2010, 2013), although the Commission has not organised an EU-initiated event since 2013. The Forums took stock of recent demographic developments and assessed policy responses to demographic change. The Forums were accompanied by a biannual

<sup>32</sup> European Commission 1989: 3.

<sup>33</sup> The European Observatory on National Family Policies started collecting data in 1989 (see European Commission 1989: 18), but as its name implied, EU actors were aware of the deep ideological differences between Member States and that they would not cede policy to the EU (see JENSON 2021: 51).

<sup>34</sup> "...the Parliament's resolutions of 1994 and 1999 on the protection of families and children, the European Council's resolution of 2000 on the work-family balance, the European Council's Stockholm Call of 2001 (on the development of family policy indicators) and the Barcelona target of 2002 (on increasing the capacity of nursery and pre-school care), which set the target of 33% of nursery places for children aged 0–3 and 90% of nursery places for children aged 3–6 in each Member State by 2010. In 2015, only 9 Member States met the 2010 targets), the Year of Families in 2004, the Commission's Green Paper on demography in 2005, the creation of the European Alliance for Families in 2007, the establishment of the Demographic Advisory Board alongside the Commission, the 2010–2015 strategy for equality between women and men, the Europe 2020 strategy, the European Pact for Gender Equality and strategic commitments." International Family Policy Outlook (see GALLAI 2019: 26).

<sup>35</sup> European Commission 1994; European Commission 2006.



European Demography Report,<sup>36</sup> which was subsequently discontinued. Despite having been initiated in 2011, during the Hungarian Presidency, and despite the recommendation of European family organisations and broad social and political support, in 2014 the theme of ‘reconciling work and family life’ was not chosen as the theme of the European Year. Despite these encouraging signs, the policy response to the demographic challenge remains, with a clear break, primarily confined to European competences related to the functioning of labour markets and equal opportunities. Against this background, the political orientations and emphases emerging from the 2014 European Parliament elections can be clearly identified.

The central theme thus remained the promotion of parental employment in a way that allows work to be reconciled with family life (the EU directive has dropped the word ‘family’ and simply replaced it with ‘private life’), especially for women.<sup>37</sup>

A further significant turning point came when the Lisbon Strategy of 2000 launched the third ‘growth wave’ of European social policy; with its call for the ‘modernisation’ of social policy, it already diagnosed social exclusion as a major challenge.<sup>38</sup> From then on, the main objective was to adopt a social inclusion approach and develop its tools, and the focus on equality between women and men and between different social groups in different situations was pushed to the background.<sup>39</sup> As this social development perspective evolved in the 2000s, it was no longer families but individual children who became the target of action.

The fight against ‘child poverty’ has become a priority in the European Union’s renewed social agenda for 2008. When the Barroso Commission published its Social Investment Package: *Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion* on 20 February 2013,<sup>40</sup> the life-cycle approach put children at the centre and childcare measures were aimed first and foremost at them, and only secondarily at parents.<sup>41</sup> In this important document, families have received little attention, despite the fact that the disadvantage and poverty of children is clearly a result of their family background. However, one comment deserves attention, namely that earning an adequate income is a challenge for families and that family-friendly jobs and employment policies are needed. The term ‘family’ was rarely mentioned in the Social Investment Package, while ‘child’ (‘children’) was mentioned in many cases.

In 2018, when the EU defined the pillar of social rights in 20 principles, families were again barely addressed.<sup>42</sup> However, the European Commission announced a directive on work–life balance for parents and carers, which returns to the familiar and solid ground

<sup>36</sup> European Commission 2007; European Commission 2008; European Commission 2011.

<sup>37</sup> HANTRAIS 1997: 340; JENSON 2021: 51.

<sup>38</sup> DALY 2020a: 353; JENSON 2021: 52.

<sup>39</sup> JENSON 2021: 51; CANTILLON – VAN LANCKER 2013: 553–564; JENSON 2009: 446–483; SARACENO 2015.

<sup>40</sup> European Commission s. a.

<sup>41</sup> JENSON 2017: 270.

<sup>42</sup> European Commission 2018.



of regulation and policy-making on parental care.<sup>43</sup> The Directive extended rights to paternity leave, parental leave, carer's leave and flexible employment, with the aim of encouraging the sharing of care between women and men and maintaining labour market participation rates. The directive was firmly anchored in the EU's traditional framework and its competence for economic growth, but took only a very narrow approach to the need to protect the interests of families.

Although since 2017 the European Parliamentary Research Service has been providing an annual overview of demographic trends in the EU, this has not brought back the political debate provided by demographic forums.<sup>44</sup>

### *Actors for family policy action*

The Commission, set up in 2019, pays attention to demography and its social consequences. In the face of changing attitudes towards families, the workings of the post of Commissioner for Demography and their appointment as Commission Vice-President has been promising and useful in this Commission's term. The current post of Commissioner for Democracy and Demography, created in 2019 and held by Dubravka Šuica, is able to point to the need for change even if the Commission has not assigned its own board administration to its operations. As a result of its work, in June 2020, the European Commission published a report on the impact of demographic change.<sup>45</sup> In this document, the Commission highlighted the main drivers of demographic developments and their implications for the EU. It is also worth noting that the Commission has created a new interactive knowledge management tool, the Demographic Atlas,<sup>46</sup> based on official Eurostat statistics and forecasts, to help understand demographic change.

Last but not least, point 18(g) of the conclusions adopted during the European Council meeting on 29–30 June 2023, clearly gives a political mandate to develop a toolbox on demography, which will be prepared by the Vice-President and experts for the Commission's approval.<sup>47</sup> This decision gives hope that the demographic challenge can be put on the agenda at the highest political level during the Hungarian Presidency.

In the new European Commission formed in 2024, the Commissioner for Demography should be given more authority and more room for manoeuvre, with an independent portfolio and directorate, including a role for family welfare. We see this as necessary because at present the current Commissioner's portfolio, including democracy, is too broad and does not allow the position to remain sufficiently focused in proposals to

<sup>43</sup> DALY 2020b.

<sup>44</sup> European Parliament 2017; European Parliament 2019; European Parliament 2021.

<sup>45</sup> European Commission 2020.

<sup>46</sup> ALVAREZ et al. 2021.

<sup>47</sup> Council of the European Union 2023b "...EIT invites the Commission to present a toolbox to address demographic challenges and notably their impact on Europe's competitive edge" on the basis of which, on 11 October 2023, the European Commission published its Communication *Demographic Change in Europe: A Toolbox for Action* document, that sets out a comprehensive approach to demographic change.

address demographic challenges. In part, its room for manoeuvre is limited by the fact that it does not have an apparatus behind it (it does not have its own directorate) to help it develop concrete technical proposals in a meaningful way.

However, the direction the post has taken is certainly to be welcomed, as it can be very well suited to reflect the family policy approach at the EU policy-making level and thus to redefine the social policy approach, once a well-constructed portfolio and policy-making direction has been defined. If the Commissioner can continue to do so as Vice-President, his/her activities can become cross-cutting and represent family and population policy interests horizontally.

Finally, it is worth noting that the European Council's proposing body, the Committee of the Regions, has twice in the last decade, in the course of the deliberations of the representatives of regional and local authorities of the European Union, expressed its opinion and made proposals on demography regarding the most pressing demographic issues of the EU.<sup>48</sup> The 2020 document deserves a special mention for its clear affirmation of the need to support families among the majority of the European population, and for its recognition of the importance of family.

Section 20 of the document stresses the need to make it economically possible for young people to start a large family. The right conditions must be created to make it easier and quicker for those who want to have children to have even more children. While recognising that policies to address future demographic change are limited and will take time to have an impact, and that the focus should therefore be on adapting to an EU of older population and making the transition smoother, it stresses that in the meantime, support should be provided for young people in the transition to adulthood and for families to increase fertility rates in the regions concerned. The document highlights the need for more investment in better work–life balance, social and family-friendly infrastructure.

Section 46 stresses that having children should not be an obstacle to professional ambition and should not lead to poverty or a reduction in purchasing power, especially for large families and single-parent families. Family planning is a long-term process and therefore requires a stable and proactive policy that includes work–life balance and fathers' participation in family life. It should be made easier for mothers to return to the labour market quickly and under flexible conditions after maternity leave; the 50 sections underline that research shows that priority should be given to young people's access to a predictable income and housing, providing them with the security they need to start a family.

In the light of this, the document stressed that the Committee of the Regions looked forward to the Commission's proposals for future childcare, based on Section 29, giving priority to measures to increase total family income and support for parents, and that family policies should not be seen as a public expenditure but rather as an investment in a strategic instrument for society.

<sup>48</sup> Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions – The EU response to the demographic challenge (2017/C 017/08); Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions – Demographic change: proposals for measuring and managing the adverse effects on EU regions (2020/C 440/07).

Meanwhile, the European Child Guarantee initiative has been adopted in the form of a Council Recommendation,<sup>49</sup> and includes improving the living conditions and social security of families as an important aspect, with a particular focus on lower income families and middle income families facing income losses due to the impact of the Covid epidemic and other crises.

The sentences in the Committee of the Regions' document can very well be drawn in parallel with the Hungarian family policy guidelines and concrete measures, which also gives hope that family policy, measures and support – as systems that remain within national competence – but also at EU level, can be important and recognised instruments for tackling demographic challenges, and that a dialogue can be started on their support within the scope of EU competence.

### **The emergence and achievements of family policy among the priorities of the 2011 Hungarian Presidency**

Hungary's first EU Presidency focused on the demographic impact of reconciling work and family life.<sup>50</sup> Among the events of the Hungarian Presidency, the followings deserve to be highlighted:

- a week-long series of events from 28 March to 2 April 2011, under the motto “Europe for Families, Families for Europe”, raised awareness of the importance of families and demonstrated the political and governmental commitment to renewing the family policy orientation
- informal meeting of ministers responsible for demography and family affairs<sup>51</sup>
- the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) of June 2011, which adopted conclusions on the impact of reconciling work and family life on demographic trends;<sup>52</sup> the conclusions reaffirmed the need to tackle demographic challenges by improving the reconciliation of work and family life, the lack of which is a clear obstacle to European families having the children they wish for

In terms of results, the emergence of a consensus on the need to pay more attention to population and families at EU level is noteworthy. There can be no question that one of the greatest challenges facing the European Union is to maintain its competitiveness and preserve its economic and social system. Although the political will to do so is not yet evident in the current institutional set-up, a change of approach to demographic and family issues is essential for Europe to achieve its global objectives.

<sup>49</sup> Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 (06.14.2021) on European Child Guarantee.

<sup>50</sup> Priorities of the 2011 Hungarian EU Presidency. For a more detailed overview of the Presidency events see FÜRÉSZ–MOLNÁR 2023: 35–45.

<sup>51</sup> 31 March – 1 April 2011: informal meeting of ministers responsible for demography and family affairs, focusing on the impact of reconciling work and family life on demographic trends (Council of the European Union 2011b).

<sup>52</sup> Council of the European Union 2011a.

Among the results, we consider it an important step that the European Economic and Social Committee also came to the same conclusion in its exploratory opinion issued at the request of the Hungarian EU Presidency. The Committee's proposals drew attention to the importance of exchanging practices between European Member States in support of family formation.<sup>53</sup> In order to strengthen this positive process, the Hungarian Presidency proposed that the European Union should designate 2014 as the European Year of Families, although this did not happen.

Despite the fact that in the more than a decade since the first Hungarian Presidency, the demographic situation of the European Union has continued to deteriorate, and from 2015 onwards its member states are facing the biggest migration crisis ever, the issue of population and thus the survival of Europe has not been given sufficient prominence on the agenda of the EU institutions.

While in the European arena, policy-makers have increasingly de-prioritised families and population, they have turned to social policies based on social inclusion and increasingly to individual support for children.<sup>54</sup> Hungary, on the other hand, is the Member State most committed to addressing the issue of families and preserving the communities that are the backbone of the nations that make up the Union. Hungary and Central Europe are also becoming increasingly aware of the importance of political issues such as demography, traditional family values, family orientation and family issues in preserving the strength of their nations. The coming together of actors willing to work for families has become a symbol of the rise of a pro-family international alliance, with the Budapest Demography Summit, now having held its 5<sup>th</sup> gathering in 2023. An event that plays a major role in building not only professional but also political capital as the Hungarian Government prepares to assume the EU Presidency.

Although the adoption of the aforementioned Directive on reconciliation of work and family life was an important step forward at the level of standards in the European Union in 2019, the Directive can be interpreted as an individual instrument rather than a step towards a single, broad-based family policy approach that could potentially take into account the solution of the demographic challenge by national resources and families. In the meantime, the policy-making attitude is largely pro-migration, focusing not only on the conditions for the natural internal movement of EU citizens enjoying the right of free movement, but increasingly on the challenges posed by third country nationals. And while policy-makers' actions are overwhelmingly geared towards the admission and eventual reception of third country nationals in Europe, even in the case of illegal economic migration, the vast majority of the European population takes a clearly contrary view.

Whatever the European policy-building goals of a presidency, it is worth paying attention to what Europeans themselves think. And though it is not surprising that the European public is more family-centred than pro-migration, it is surprising that the political elites in many European countries and the institutions of the European Union ignore this fact.

<sup>53</sup> Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on "The role of family policy in the process of demographic change: sharing best practice across Member States" (exploratory opinion).

<sup>54</sup> JENSON 2021: 52.

The Századvég Foundation for Policy Studies and the Mária Kopp Institute for Demography and Families (KINCS) are conducting a targeted survey of European citizens' attitudes towards family, demography and migration in the framework of Project Europe. The representative survey of 30,000 citizens clearly shows that a large majority of Europeans, if given the opportunity to express their views, expect decision-makers to support families and help them have children, rather than to promote migration as the only salutatory solution.<sup>55</sup> It is also worth noting that: "...the fault line between solving the demographic challenge by encouraging immigration or increasing the birth rate and supporting families also exists between European citizens and the leadership of the European Union. Two thirds (65%) of European citizens polled rated the EU's handling of the migration crisis as weak [...]. A good two thirds (68%) of the 28,000 Europeans polled said their government should rely on internal resources and support local families rather than immigration. Even more respondents (88%) consider family an important value [...]. Eight out of ten (81%) EU residents think it is important for the state to support families and family formation. More than half (53%) of EU citizens believe that young people should be helped to have children as soon as possible."<sup>56</sup>

European decision-makers need to take into account the views of the European population, for whom the family is a priority, to support it and to tackle depopulation by strengthening families rather than encouraging migration.

Improving the demographic situation in the European Union will therefore be one of the top priorities of the second Hungarian Presidency, which will run from July to the end of December 2024. In this context, progress must be made in terms of strengthening European families, parents with children, especially families with children in special situations, such as single-parent families and large families (families with three or more children), and promoting the birth of children planned by young people, at least at a political level, by raising awareness and revisiting the principle of the issue. With an ambitious objective, these principles and the means to implement them must be included in some way among the responses to the demographic challenges.

### **The current state of Hungarian family policy, its opportunities and challenges**

In assessing the importance of an autonomous family policy, it is first and foremost important to consider the reasons behind it. The country's population has been in constant decline since 1981, so the most basic objective is to halt the country's depopulation by mobilising society's internal resources: supporting families. This objective also reveals three further reasons: 1. There can be no economic growth or sustainable development without the well-being of families. 2. The state of society reflects the state of families,

<sup>55</sup> See FÜRÉSZ–MOLNÁR 2023: 40. The Századvég Political School Foundation and the Mária Kopp Institute for Demography and Families (KINCS) have been researching the attitudes of European citizens towards families for three years now, as part of the Project Europe.

<sup>56</sup> GERE 2023: 66.

which highlights an emotional factor that cannot be ignored when laying down the principles of family policy. 3. Supporting children and families is the most important investment in the future of the nation, its survival and in making a nation stronger.

In the fight against the demographic winter that Europe is suffering from (the continent's population is simultaneously ageing and shrinking),<sup>57</sup> the fundamental fact that overall fertility in the European Union is far below the level needed to simply reproduce the population must be faced.<sup>58</sup> While in 1950 it was 2.77, by 2021 Europe's fertility rate had fallen to 1.53 (Eurostat), even though it would need to reach 2.1 to reproduce current population levels. Just as importantly, the decline in the active population, which directly (via families) or indirectly (via social security systems, especially social security pensions) supports the inactive (children, elderly over 65), is also accelerating faster than the decline in the population. This will lead to the long-term unsustainability of current social models, especially pension systems. If a State offsets this decline with a model based mainly on migration of working-age people, it must in any case take account of the impact of this migrant workforce on society.

Pál Demény has pointed out persuasively that to address Europe's demographic problems only by mass immigration is an illusion.<sup>59</sup> Immigration can increase fertility in the short term, but only at the cost of radically changing the cultural and ethnic composition of the host society. This is particularly true with the mass influx of asylum seekers into Europe that started in 2015 and was accompanied by significant irregular migration flows. The contribution of these migrants to the functioning of the host economy is negligible compared to the labour force that is in most cases deliberately attracted to Europe for targeted employment. Meanwhile, the financial burden of the procedures and subsidies associated with their admission are increasing significantly, while the majority of them do not consider either sustainable entry into the labour market or social integration as their fundamental objective. This reinforces what Professor Demény has highlighted, and only accelerates the processes that are disrupting the ethnic and cultural composition and balances of host societies, while internal social tensions are increasing. For all these reasons, migration cannot be the only answer to the questions of meeting economic needs. Economic sustainability cannot be achieved on the basis of immigration alone, but also requires demographic sustainability.<sup>60</sup>

Recognising this, the Hungarian Government committed itself to a different path in 2010. It wants to halt population decline through an effective family policy, with a focus on families having and raising children. This approach will ensure the emotional

<sup>57</sup> FÜRÉSZ–MOLNÁR 2023: 37.

<sup>58</sup> The population of our continent in 2022 will be 745 million, representing 10% of the world's population (United Nations 2022). In 1950, the population was 550 million, so by today, the increase is only 35%. This is the smallest increase among the continents. By 2100, the continent's population is projected to fall to 586 million people, reducing Europe's share of the population from 10% to less than 6% (See Hungarian Central Statistical Office s. a.). "According to Eurostat population data, in 1960 there were on average three young people (aged 0–14) for every old person (aged 65 or over), while in 2060 it is projected that there will be two old people for every young person" (Eurostat s. a.; FÜRÉSZ–MOLNÁR 2023: 37).

<sup>59</sup> DEMÉNY 2016: 219, 366.

<sup>60</sup> OLÁH 2015.



well-being of society and its members in the short and medium term and the long-term survival of the nation. A loving, harmonious family and a good marriage are crucial health protective factors. The emotional well-being of members of society is enhanced when a well-functioning supportive community, the family, provides individuals with a good base to rely on in their challenging daily lives. A good family life is the basis for a good quality of life, and the state of society is the state of the families that make up its essential building blocks. Family policy has an important role to play in protecting and supporting families to achieve the goal of creating a balanced and viable society of well-functioning families.<sup>61</sup>

Among the challenges facing families, emphasis must necessarily be placed on those that affect their economic opportunities and financial security, while the key to a successful policy response is to build a predictable system that is complex, targeted and flexible. A large family policy system must be well adapted to both individual circumstances and global challenges.

The current family policy is based on five clearly identifiable pillars:

- Parenting should be financially advantageous for families
- Families should receive help for home ownership
- Family policy should be based on mothers
- Every sphere of the country shall be made family-friendly
- The institution of family and children should be protected by law

In order to achieve these goals, the Hungarian family policy must provide instruments that work and provide meaningful support in the following areas: first and foremost, families need financial support, because this is the basis upon which the state can provide for their financial security, that is by partially assuming the families' financial burdens. In order to achieve this, and in line with the principle of self-sufficiency, the relevant legislation necessarily provides for a part of family support to be linked to employment, which can ensure that families' financial situation is constantly strengthened by taking account of their own efforts and financial results. This is logically linked to a system of measures to reconcile work and family life, as well as support for adequate housing and home ownership, which is important for the majority of Hungarians.

However, beyond the material level, important areas of today's Hungarian family policy are the promotion of the well-being of children, intergenerational solidarity and the family-friendly operation of the country, the effective introduction and maintenance of measures and instruments that develop and ensure an all-encompassing family-friendly approach that is clearly perceptible in everyday social existence.

All these family policy measures will make it possible to build and continuously strengthen a society that is strong and capable of renewal, but which builds on its traditions and roots and preserves its culture.

<sup>61</sup> NOVÁK et al. 2017; PÁRI et al. 2019: 12–25; AGÓCS–BALOGH 2020: 38–60; ENGLER et al. 2022: 10–21.

## **The impact of family policy on economic and social development**

The Hungarian Government sees family policy as a long-term investment in the well-being of families, with the most important of its many expected benefits and outcomes being the survival of our nation. There are also clearly visible pragmatic benefits of this investment, such as ensuring the supply of new labour and thus the sustainability of our social security systems. In addition, family policy already has a very strong mobilising effect, promoting active participation in the world of labour. As eligibility for the majority of family support measures is linked by law to gainful activity (e.g. employment) and related social insurance, it is in the interest of all concerned to choose work rather than handouts. But it provides more than that: it is an approach that restores the self-esteem of those who choose to work and start a family by leaving a visible share of their income to the family through a system of family tax credits, measured in concrete terms, by personal income tax or, in the case of low levels of personal income tax, even social security contributions. And the larger the income and the family itself, the more resources are left with the family. Such family financial transfers (benefits and subsidies) are a very visible sign that the state and society regard the family and the child as a fundamental value. They also help to retain the domestic labour force base in a wider context than a system of equal amounts of benefit-like support for each child. Research suggests that a return to a pre-2010 system of support schemes, would visibly narrow the labour force base and demotivate a large proportion of parents with young children.<sup>62</sup>

Since there can be no economic growth and sustainable development without having children and strengthening families, the primary objective of family policy is to ensure that individuals can decide to start a family of their own free will, without coercion, and that families can also decide for themselves concerning their own affairs, including having children. Family policy ensures the autonomy of those preparing to start a family and of family members, protects the rights of family members, helps families to achieve internal stability and strengthens their position and security within society by reducing the risk of poverty. The State seeks to make it easier for families to work while having and raising children, by covering part of the costs of having and raising children, thus contributing to a positive social image and appreciation of families.

As the government builds a work- and family-based society, child-rearing and work encourage each other, encouraging participation in the labour market as opposed to welfare-based subsidies. This mobilises internal resources immediately,<sup>63</sup> in case of labour shortages, which are common in most EU countries, and in the long run it can also ensure a supply of sufficiently skilled labour in the domestic education system more efficiently and firmly than migration.

<sup>62</sup> CHRISTL–GARCÍA 2023.

<sup>63</sup> CHRISTL–GARCÍA 2023.

The decline in population is accompanied by a significant decline in economic output. It is already apparent that the EU is in decline in an increasingly competitive global environment, in which its shrinking share of the world's population plays a significant role.<sup>64</sup>

Having children is therefore a key issue for competitiveness and sustainability in the short, medium and long term. Even if, at first sight, this response to economic challenges and labour shortages may seem more expensive and slower, i.e. less effective. It is necessary to recognise that only a complex response, taking into account all the social and economic impacts, can determine what is more effective: reversing internal demographic trends and mobilising internal resources, or a commitment to migration.

The Hungarian experience shows that having children and responsible parenthood is the most important investment in the future. If only because of the economic and competitiveness effects in the narrower sense, since among the effects on employment, the possibility of a well-educated workforce with children of their own means a more efficient and better mobilised economic resource building than the replacement of resources through migration.

The international aid organisation Malteser International in its report for the year 2021, citing data from the German Federal Labour Office (IAB), found that among the eight countries with the highest number of asylum seekers in Germany (Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Syria, Somalia), the employment rate for the 15–65 age group is only 37%, which is almost double among the native German population (70%) and much lower than for people from the new Member States or the Western Balkans (around 60%). The German employment office classifies possible activities into four types: unskilled, skilled, specialist (at least two years of vocational training, BA degree), expert (MA degree). Their survey shows that half of the arrivals from the eight countries mentioned above were in the category of some kind of unskilled work. Most of those employed in specialist or expert positions from the eight countries were Iranian nationals (30%).

In addition, refugees were more often employed in fixed-term jobs (69%) than non-migrants (10%). A further 18% were employed in temporary work, which was the case for only 1% of non-migrants.<sup>65</sup> It is particularly worrying that this is not a temporary phenomenon, as these figures show no significant improvement at all compared to the situation in 2017. However, it is not only the labour market situation that needs to be considered to paint the overall picture. The arrival of irregular migrants since 2015, is not a reassuring response to the challenges, nor can it be argued that the economic impact of irregular immigration from third countries has been positive anywhere so far.

<sup>64</sup> It is estimated that by 2050, six of the world's seven largest economies will be developing countries, led by China and India. Germany will slip to 9<sup>th</sup> place and the U.K. to 10<sup>th</sup>. G7 members France and Italy will drop out of the top 10 and top 20 economies respectively (see FÜRÉSZ–MOLNÁR 2023: 37; PwC 2021).

<sup>65</sup> Malteser 2021: 32, 37.

In general, however, the observation of increasing numbers of migrants from outside Europe that create parallel societies are being reinforced.<sup>66</sup> This in turn directly threatens both Europe's social integrity and its economic competitiveness.<sup>67</sup>

Most developed economies face significant labour shortages. As in other developed countries of the world, this is particularly true for the developed countries of Europe in terms of high-skilled jobs.<sup>68</sup> As migration is the rarest way to meet the permanent demand for skilled labour in Western European economies, there is an increasing brain drain from the Member States that have joined since 2004. This process, however, can significantly weaken the economic potential of the sending country,<sup>69</sup> and this will in no way shift the balance of internal mobility in the European Union, and the competitiveness of the European Union as a whole, in a positive direction. Moreover, since 2015, the attraction of highly skilled labour from outside the EU is in practice no longer the main direction of European migration flows. It is not the most challenging of migration issues, nor is it the migration segment that generates the largest number of immigrants in Europe.

Although the so-called EU directives on migration<sup>70</sup> were also adopted to attract well-qualified professionals who would come to work in order to increase Europe's competitiveness, that is, they do not at all embody an unrestricted approach to the admission of economic refugees, the current migration processes and the EU institutional responses to them reinforce and encourage the latter. However, if the purpose of migration is to obtain the necessary labour force, it must be seen that, in contrast to the workers arriving through legal migration, who are specifically sought by the actors of national economies and who are suitable for work, in most cases, the economic refugees who appear through irregular migration are not in fact able to make a meaningful contribution to the development of economies. At the same time, their negative impact on host societies and on the economy and competitiveness of host countries as a whole is hard to deny. This is precisely to show that migration solutions are not short-term issues, but can only be assessed in the light of their longer-term effectiveness and impact. These ambivalent results and the new societal challenges they pose rightly raise the question: Is this the only direction in which Europe can move?

Meanwhile, European mainstream decision-makers today do not mention the promotion of European childbirth and the protection of families even among the long-term solutions,<sup>71</sup> although the achievements of Central Europe and especially of our country should at least make all responsible decision-makers think.

<sup>66</sup> While in a growing number of countries the proportion of children born to third country mothers is increasing compared to the proportion of children born to majority nationalities in EU Member States (one in three in Cyprus, Austria, Belgium, Sweden, Malta and Germany, one in four in Spain, Ireland, France and Italy, and one in five in several countries; see FÜRÉSZ–MOLNÁR 2023: 39).

<sup>67</sup> FÜRÉSZ–MOLNÁR 2023: 39.

<sup>68</sup> In Germany, in recent years, there has been a steady increase in the migration of highly skilled workers from India to work in IT, science and service professions (Malteser 2021).

<sup>69</sup> FÜRÉSZ–MOLNÁR 2023: 38.

<sup>70</sup> Council Directive 2009/50/EC (blue card directive).

<sup>71</sup> FÜRÉSZ–MOLNÁR 2023: 38.

## **Hungary's interests for the future development of family policy**

EU data for the decade 2010–2020, show that the sustained increase in childbearing was observed in those countries that sought to reduce depopulation not by promoting migration but by supporting the birth of children and strengthening families.<sup>72</sup> On average, fertility rates have fallen by 2.5% in EU Member States,<sup>73</sup> while the Czech Republic and Slovakia, as well as Latvia and Romania, have seen a substantial increase, mainly through population growth based on internal resources. In contrast, primary migration destinations such as France, Sweden, Belgium or the Netherlands have seen a significant decline or no increase (e.g. Germany) in fertility rates, which is an indicator of the propensity to have children.

There is no question that Europe needs to prevent the steep decline in fertility rates that is currently occurring in many countries in East Asia. Of course, policy-makers must avoid senseless strategies to force people to have more children than they actually want. Fortunately, European research shows that people wish to have more children than are eventually born.<sup>74</sup> Not surprisingly, not only in our country, but also elsewhere, people are looking for practical ways of relying on internal resources. Rotkirch, for example, lists ten cost-effective ways to address this, including a family-friendly approach, providing equal opportunities, valuing men and fathers, and raising fertility awareness.<sup>75</sup>

Since the 1970s, first births have been delayed in Europe, so raising awareness of the biological limits to late childbearing among young men and women is essential to complement policies addressing the wider economic and social causes of delayed fertility.<sup>76</sup> Meanwhile, most national governments and EU institutions are still focusing on migration issues and looking for solutions to demographic challenges.

It is certainly worth taking into account that Member States have a different focus when dealing with demographic issues. They often have different interests and objectives in finding solutions and applying measures. For this very reason, it is important to make a breakthrough in ensuring that the EU's institutional approach is not one-sided once the Trio Presidency's programme has been implemented. It is in our national interest that the EU legal system should leave the issue of family policy within national competence, while at the same time putting the issue of tackling demographic challenges on the agenda, giving Member States a free hand to find appropriate solutions. Preserving sovereignty in the area of family policy is clearly a priority for us, given the current political mainstream approach and European differences, but it would be necessary to ensure that the diversity of national approaches is recognised by the decision-makers in the European institutional system. Targeted support for specific groups, such as families with three or more children or single parents, is also timely in order to create opportunities.

<sup>72</sup> FŰRÉSZ–MOLNÁR 2023: 38.

<sup>73</sup> Eurostat s. a.c.

<sup>74</sup> Eurostat s. a.c.

<sup>75</sup> GIETEL-BASTEN et al. 2022.

<sup>76</sup> BEAUJOUAN–SOBOTKA 2022: 3.

The majority of the European population, if given the opportunity, clearly expresses a preference for supporting families rather than exclusively recognising and supporting migration.<sup>77</sup> For citizens of both Central and Eastern and Southern Europe, family is the most important value, with more than nine out of ten saying so.<sup>78</sup>

While Hungary's first EU Presidency focused on the potential demographic impact of reconciling work and family life in the area of family policy,<sup>79</sup> the second Presidency will provide an opportunity to address the demographic challenges in all their complexity. The success of Hungarian family policy (in terms of marriage rates, fertility growth, reduction in abortions, employment of parents of young children, increase in family incomes and the associated reduction in poverty) and the possibility of sharing good practice across Europe could play an important role in this.

There is a need to recognise at a European level that all national solutions that strengthen Europe's competitiveness have a place in Europe. Good and successful solutions should be shared, examined and not only left to national governments to implement, but should also be supported.

Hungarian experience shows that what matters for competitiveness is, for example, how a workplace treats its employees. Sharing good practices of family-friendly workplaces and family-friendly companies/enterprises, and making targeted EU funds available for the implementation of these practices at national and pan-European level can have added value in terms of increasing competitiveness. It can also mobilise a labour force that would otherwise remain outside the labour market, both among parents with young children, men and women alike, and older and younger workers. It is important that not only environmental 'green' objectives should be taken into account in the assessment and screening of companies, but that family friendliness should also be an integral part of social responsibility. If only because, as KINCS research has confirmed, protecting the environment, i.e. protecting the created world, and having and raising children, i.e. protecting and passing on life, are values that reinforce each other. There is no doubt that the family is the cradle of sustainability, and that having a large family and protecting the environment go hand in hand.

It is in line with Hungarian interests that the issue of strengthening intergenerational cooperation, especially with regard to care tasks, should also be a focus of EU policy-making. A holistic approach to elderly care and childcare, providing families with opportunities and freedom of decision, is clearly an aspect that should be supported by European institutional decision-makers. This objective should be pursued in such a way as to promote a meaningful choice for those concerned to take on the care of their loved ones and family members, either within an appropriate care system or at home and/or within the family.

It is vital to recognise that encouraging and promoting family formation, especially among young people, is a matter of European interest. In this context, attention should

<sup>77</sup> FÜRÉSZ–MOLNÁR 2023: 39, 42; GERE 2023: 66.

<sup>78</sup> KISS-KOZMA 2022.

<sup>79</sup> Government of Hungary 2010.



be paid to the fact that the childbearing age is increasingly being extended, which plays a major role in reducing the number of children being born within a family.<sup>80</sup> It is worth encouraging creative, 21<sup>st</sup> century ways of putting this into practice, for example through family-friendly higher education or by raising young people's fertility awareness. As the social support provided by the family is key to mental and therefore in many ways physical health, strong families are needed for healthy, harmonious European societies. Loneliness, its associated illnesses or depopulation, can also have a negative impact on the competitiveness of European societies and economies.

Preventing the marginalisation of Europe, preserving the self-sustaining internal strength and social cohesion of our Member States are our common goals, to which we have a duty to apply all the good and effective responses possible, and to reject them on ideological grounds alone is not only a mistake, but also dangerous for the future of Europe. The Hungarian Presidency can provide an opportunity to put this idea centre stage by establishing a frank and factual dialogue.

## References

- AGÓCS, Gergely – SZOMSZÉD, Orsolya – FÜRÉSZ, Tünde (2019): Európai családpolitikák – a KINCS Európai Családpolitikai RangSORA. *Kapocs*, 2(3–4), 3–11. Online: [https://epa.oszk.hu/02900/02943/00082/pdf/EPA02943\\_kapocs\\_2019\\_3-4\\_003-011.pdf](https://epa.oszk.hu/02900/02943/00082/pdf/EPA02943_kapocs_2019_3-4_003-011.pdf)
- AGÓCS, Gergely – BALOGH, Enikő (2020): Ismét népszerű a házasság Magyarországon. *Kapocs*, 3(3–4), 38–60.
- ALVAREZ, Marlene – BOCCARDO, Serena – BOSCO, Claudio – CHOUMELOVA, Dessislava – CONTE, Alessandra – GHIO, Daniela – GOJON, Anne – KALANTARYAN, Sona – LOESCHNER, Jan – McMAHON, Simon – NATALE, Fabrizio – SCHUMACHER, Guenter – SCIPIONI, Marco – SERMI, Francesco – TARCHI, Dario – TINTORI, Guido – KOMPIL, Mert (2021): *Atlas of Demography. Release 1.0*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Online: <https://doi.org/10.2760/57296>
- ANDERSON, Karen M. (2015): *Social Policy in the European Union*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- BEAUJOUAN, Éva (2020): Latest-Late Fertility? Decline and Resurgence of Late Parenthood Across the Low-Fertility Countries. *Population and Development Review*, 46(2), 219–247. Online: <https://doi.org/10.1111/padr.12334>
- BEAUJOUAN, Éva – SOBOTKA, Tomáš (2022): Is 40 the New 30? Increasing Reproductive Intentions and Fertility Rates beyond Age 40. In NIKOLAOU, Dimitrios S. – SEIFER, David B. (eds.): *Optimizing the Management of Fertility in Women over 40*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 3–13. Online: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009025270.002>
- BIRÓNÉ MALUSTYIK, Brigitta (2022): A nyitott koordinációs mechanizmus működése az Európai Unióban – különös tekintettel a szociális biztonsági rendszerek koordinációjára. *Polgári Szemle*, 18 (1–3), 297–308. Online: <https://doi.org/10.24307/psz.2022.1121>
- CANTILLON, Bea – VAN LANCKER, Wim (2013): Three Shortcomings of the Social Investment Perspective. *Social Policy and Society*, 12(4), 553–564. Online: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1474746413000080>

<sup>80</sup> BEAUJOUAN 2020: 219–247.

- CHRISTL, Michael – GARCÍA, Ana A. (2023): Hypothetical Tax-Benefit Reforms in Hungary: Shifting from Tax Relief to Cash Transfers for Family Support. *ECINEQ*, 648. Online: [www.ecineq.org/milano/WP/ECINEQ2023-648.pdf](http://www.ecineq.org/milano/WP/ECINEQ2023-648.pdf)
- DEMÉNY, Pál (2016): *Népességgazdaság a közjó szolgálatában*. Budapest: KSH Népeségstudományi Kutatóintézet. Online: [http://demografia.hu/hu/letoltes/kiadvanyok/Demografus-konyvtar/Tartalom\\_Demografus\\_Konyvtar\\_4.pdf](http://demografia.hu/hu/letoltes/kiadvanyok/Demografus-konyvtar/Tartalom_Demografus_Konyvtar_4.pdf)
- DALY, Mary (2020a): Children and their Rights and Entitlements in EU Welfare States. *Journal of Social Policy*, 49(2), 343–360. Online: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279419000370>
- DALY, Mary (2020b): Conceptualizing and Analyzing Family Policy and How It Is Changing. In NIEUWENHUIS, Rense – VAN LANCKER, Wim (eds.): *The Palgrave Handbook of Family Policy*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. 25–41. Online: [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-54618-2\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-54618-2_2)
- ENGLER, Ágnes (2017): *A család mint erőforrás*. Budapest: Gondolat.
- ENGLER, Ágnes – PÁRI, András (2022): A család jövője – az elsődleges szocializációs közeg társadalmi szerepváltozása. *Századvég*, 2(3), 11–34.
- ENGLER, Ágnes – MARKOS, Valéria – MAJOR, Enikő (2022): Gyermekvállalási tervek a párkapcsolati jellemzők tükrében. *Kapocs*, 5(1), 10–21. Online: [https://epa.oszk.hu/02900/02943/00088/pdf/EPA02943\\_kapocs\\_2022\\_1\\_010-021.pdf](https://epa.oszk.hu/02900/02943/00088/pdf/EPA02943_kapocs_2022_1_010-021.pdf)
- FARKAS, Péter (2012): *A szeretet civilizációjáért. Társadalompolitika – szociálpolitika – családpolitika és a keresztény társadalometika*. Budapest: L'Harmattan.
- FÜRÉSZ, Tünde – MOLNÁR, Balázs (2021): The First Decade of Building a Family-Friendly Hungary. *Quaderns de Politiques Familiars*, (7), 6–17.
- FÜRÉSZ, Tünde – MOLNÁR, Balázs Péter (2023): Addressing Europe's Demographic Challenges by Supporting Families Instead of Encouraging Migration. In NAVRACSICS, Tibor – SCHMIDT, Laura – TÁRNOK, Balázs (eds.): *On the Way to the Hungarian EU Presidency*. Budapest: Ludovika University Press. 35–45.
- GALLAI, Sándor (2001): *European Social Dialogue*. Budapest: Corvinus University of Budapest.
- GALLAI, Sándor (2019): A családpolitika helye a demográfiai válsággal küzdő Európában. In SZÉKELY, András (ed.): *Nemzetközi családpolitikai kitekintő*. Budapest: Kopp Mária Intézet a Népesedésért és a Családokért. 15–27.
- GELLÉRNÉ LUKÁCS, Éva (2018): A családtagok kérdéskörének kapcsolata a személyek szabad mozgásával az EU-jogban, a Brexit fényében. In SZEIBERT, Orsolya (ed.): *Család és családtagok. Jogági tükröződések*. Budapest: ELTE Eötvös Kiadó. 109–136.
- GELLÉRNÉ LUKÁCS, Éva (2019): A családi ellátások indexálása az Európai Unióban. In RAFFAI, Katalin – SZABÓ, Sarolta (eds.): *Honeste benefacere pro scientia. Ünnepi kötet Burián László 65. születésnapja alkalmából*. Budapest: Pázmány Press. 179–193.
- GELLÉRNÉ LUKÁCS, Éva – DANI, Csaba (2022): A családi ellátások indexálásának uniós jogba ütközése. *Kapocs*, 5(3–4), 67–78. Online: [https://epa.oszk.hu/02900/02943/00090/pdf/EPA02943\\_kapocs\\_2022\\_3-4\\_067-078.pdf](https://epa.oszk.hu/02900/02943/00090/pdf/EPA02943_kapocs_2022_3-4_067-078.pdf)
- GERE, Dömötör (2023): Családszemlélet Európában és Magyarországon egy nagymintás nemzetközi felmérés alapján. *Kapocs*, 6(2–3), 66–76. Online: [https://epa.oszk.hu/02900/02943/00092/pdf/EPA02943\\_kapocs\\_2023\\_2-3.pdf](https://epa.oszk.hu/02900/02943/00092/pdf/EPA02943_kapocs_2023_2-3.pdf)
- GIETEL-BASTEN, Stuart – ROTKIRCH, Anna – SOBOTKA, Tomáš (2022): Changing the Perspective on Low Birth Rates: Why Simplistic Solutions Won't Work. *The BMJ*, 379. Online: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj-2022-072670>
- Government of Hungary (2010): *A magyar EU-elnökség prioritásai* [Priorities of the Hungarian EU Presidency]. Online: <https://2010-2014.kormany.hu/download/a/d1/10000/A%20magyar%20EU-eln%C3%B6ks%C3%A9g%20priorit%C3%A1sai.pdf>

- GYULAVÁRI, Tamás (2003): Az Európai Unió szociális joga: érdekek keresztútjába. *JURA*, 9(2), 45–58.
- GYULAVÁRI, Tamás ed. (2014): *Az Európai Unió szociális dimenziója*. Budapest: Háttér Kiadó.
- HANTRAIS, Linda (1995): *Social Policy in the European Union*. London: Red Globe Press. Online: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-24102-6>
- HANTRAIS, Linda (1997): Exploring Relationships between Social Policy and Changing Family Forms within the European Union. *European Journal of Population/Revue Européenne de Démographie*, 13(4), 339–379.
- JENSON, Jane (2009): Lost in Translation: The Social Investment Perspective and Gender Equality. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society*, 16(4), 446–483. Online: <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxp019>
- JENSON, Jane (2017): The New Maternalism. Children First, Women Second. In ERGAS, Yasmine – JENSON, Jane – MICHEL, Sonya (eds.): *Reassembling Motherhood. Procreation and Care in a Globalized World*. New York: Columbia University Press. 269–286. Online: <https://doi.org/10.7312/ergal7050-016>
- JENSON, Jane (2021): Beyond the National: How the EU, OECD, and World Bank Do Family Policy. In NIEUWENHUIS, Rense – VAN LANCKER, Wim (eds.): *The Palgrave Handbook of Family Policy*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. 45–68. Online: [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-54618-2\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-54618-2_3)
- KINCS (2019): *Intergenerációs kutatás a reprodukciós kort meghaladott idősebb generáció és a reprodukciós korban lévő fiatalok körében*. Online: [www.koppmariaintezet.hu/docs/Intergeneracios\\_kutatasi\\_jelentes\\_infografikaval.pdf](http://www.koppmariaintezet.hu/docs/Intergeneracios_kutatasi_jelentes_infografikaval.pdf)
- KISS-KOZMA, Georgina (2022): *Ostromlott értékeink – Values Under Siege 2022*. Budapest: Ifjúságkutató Intézet – Mathias Corvinus Collegium. Online: <https://ifjusagkutatoiintezet.hu/kiadvany/ostromlott-ertekeink-values-under-siege>
- LAKNER, Zoltán (2012): *Szociálpolitika* [Social Policy]. Budapest: Szent István Társulat.
- NOVÁK, Katalin – FÜRÉSZ, Tünde eds. (2021): *Családbarát évtized 2010–2020*. Budapest: Kopp Mária Intézet a Népesedésért.
- NOVÁK, Katalin – GÖRÖG, Norbert – FARKAS, Péter – HORVÁTH, Viktor – SZÉKELY, András eds. (2017): *Családbarát fordulat 2010–2018*. Budapest: Családbarát Ország Nonprofit Közhasznú Kft.
- OLÁH, SZ. LÍVIA (2015): Changing Families in the European Union: Trends and Policy Implications. *Families and Societies, Working Paper Series*, 44. Online: [www.familiesandsocieties.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/WP44Olah2015.pdf](http://www.familiesandsocieties.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/WP44Olah2015.pdf)
- PÁRI, András – VARGA, Anikó – BALOGH, Enikő (2019): Magyar családpolitikai folyamatok a Családvédelmi Akcióterv 2019. szeptember végén rendelkezésre álló eredményeinek tükrében. *Kapocs*, 2(3–4), 12–25. Online: [https://epa.oszk.hu/02900/02943/00082/pdf/EPA02943\\_kapocs\\_2019\\_3-4\\_012-025.pdf](https://epa.oszk.hu/02900/02943/00082/pdf/EPA02943_kapocs_2019_3-4_012-025.pdf)
- PÁRI, András – SZARVAS, Andrea – NAGY, Tímea – HORVÁTH-VARGA, Anikó (2022): *Több gyermek, zöldőbb jövő – környezettudatos magatartás az európai és magyar nagycsaládok körében*. In PÉTI, Márton – RESS, Boglárka (eds.): *A Kárpát-medencei magyarság helye és szerepe a klímaváltozás és a lokális társadalmi átalakulások folyamatában*. Tanulmányok. Budapest: Nemzetstratégiai Kutatóintézet. 27–41.
- PwC (2021): *The World in 2050. The Long View: How Will the Global Economic Order Change by 2050?* Online: [www.pwc.com/gx/en/research-insights/economy/the-world-in-2050.html](http://www.pwc.com/gx/en/research-insights/economy/the-world-in-2050.html)
- ROSS, George (2001): Europe: An Actor Without a Role. In JENSON, Jane – SINEAU, Mariette (eds.): *Who Cares? Women's Work, Childcare And Welfare State Redesign*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 177–213.

- SARACENO, Chiara (2015): A Critical Look to the Social Investment Approach from a Gender Perspective. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society*, 22(2), 257–269. Online: <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxv008>
- SZÉKELY, András ed. (2019): *Nemzetközi családpolitikai kitekintő*. Budapest: Kopp Mária Intézet a Népesedésért és a Családokért. Online: <https://konyvtar.koppmariaintezet.hu/language/hu/termek/kincs-europai-csaladpolitikai-kitekinto/>
- THÉVENON, Olivier – NEYER, Gerda eds. (2014): Family Policies and Diversity in Europe: The State-of-the-Art Regarding Fertility, Work, Care, Leave, Laws and Self-Sufficiency. *Families and Societies, Working Paper Series*, 7. Online: [www.familiesandsocieties.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/WP7ThevenonNeyer2014.pdf](http://www.familiesandsocieties.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/WP7ThevenonNeyer2014.pdf)

### *Primary sources*

- Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and the Treaty on European Union. Online: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:12012M/TXT&from=FI>
- Council Directive 2009/50/EC of 25 May 2009 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of highly qualified employment. OJ L 155, 18.6.2009, 17–29.
- Council of the European Union (2011a): *Council Conclusions on Reconciliation of Work and Family Life in the Context of Demographic Change*. 3099<sup>th</sup> Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council Meeting. Luxembourg, 17 June 2011. Online: [www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/122875.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/122875.pdf)
- Council of the European Union (2011b): *Declaration by the Trio Presidency (Spain, Belgium, Hungary) and Poland on the Impact of Reconciliation of Work and Family Life on Demography Dynamics*. Gödöllő, 1 April 2011. Online: [www.womenlobby.org/IMG/pdf/trio\\_pl\\_declaration\\_on\\_reconciliation.pdf](http://www.womenlobby.org/IMG/pdf/trio_pl_declaration_on_reconciliation.pdf)
- Council of the European Union (2023a): *18-month Programme of the Council (1 July 2023 – 31 December 2024)*. Brussels, 23 June 2023. Online: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10597-2023-COR-1/en/pdf>
- Council of the European Union (2023b): *European Council Meeting Conclusions* 18 g) (29–30 June 2023). Online: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7-2023-INIT/en/pdf>
- Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 of 14 June 2021 establishing a European Child Guarantee. OJ L 223, 22.6.2021, 14–23.
- Council Recommendation of 14 July 2023 on the 2023 National Reform Programme of Hungary and delivering a Council opinion on the 2023 Convergence Programme of Hungary. OJ C 312, 1.9.2023, 155–166.
- Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on Work–Life Balance for Parents and Carers and Repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU OJ L 188, 12.7.2019, 79–93.
- European Commission (1989): *Communication from the Commission on Family Policies*. COM (89) 363 final. Online: <https://aei.pitt.edu/3767/1/3767.pdf>
- European Commission (1994): *The Demographic Situation of the European Union*. COM (94) 595 final. Online: <https://aei.pitt.edu/5831/1/5831.pdf>

- European Commission (2006): *The Demographic Future of Europe – From Challenge to Opportunity*. COM (2006) 571 final. Online: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/the-demographic-future-of-europe-from-challenge-to-opportunity.html>
- European Commission (2013): *Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion – Including Implementing the European Social Fund 2014–2020*. COM (2013) 83 final. Online: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52013DC0083>
- European Commission (2018): *European Pillar of Social Rights*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Online: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ce37482a-d0ca-11e7-a7df-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-62666461>
- European Commission (2020): *European Commission Report on the Impact of Demographic Change*. Online: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/demography\\_report\\_2020\\_n.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/demography_report_2020_n.pdf)
- European Commission (2021): *She Figures 2021. Gender in Research and Innovation. Statistics and Indicators*. Online: <https://ec.europa.eu/research-and-innovation/en/knowledge-publications-tools-and-data/interactive-reports/she-figures-2021#chapter7>
- European Commission (s. a.): *Addressing Poverty and Supporting Social Inclusion*. Online: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1044&langId=en>
- European Parliament (2017): *Demographic Outlook for the European Union*. European Parliamentary Research Service, and European University Institute (December 2017). Online: [www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2017/614646/EPRS\\_IDA\(2017\)614646\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2017/614646/EPRS_IDA(2017)614646_EN.pdf)
- European Parliament (2019): *Demographic Outlook for the European Union*. European Parliamentary Research Service (May 2019). Online: [www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2019/637955/EPRS\\_IDA\(2019\)637955\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2019/637955/EPRS_IDA(2019)637955_EN.pdf)
- European Parliament (2021): *Demographic Outlook for the European Union*. European Parliamentary Research Service (March 2021). Online: [www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/690528/EPRS\\_STU\(2021\)690528\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/690528/EPRS_STU(2021)690528_EN.pdf)
- Eurostat (2019): *Share of Live Births from Foreign-Born and Native-Born Mothers, 2019 (%)*. Online: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Fig7\\_Share\\_of\\_live\\_births\\_from\\_foreign-born\\_and\\_native-born\\_mothers,\\_2019\\_\(%25\).png](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Fig7_Share_of_live_births_from_foreign-born_and_native-born_mothers,_2019_(%25).png)
- Eurostat (s. a.a): *Population Projections*. Online: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Archive:Population\\_projections](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Archive:Population_projections)
- Eurostat (s. a.b): *Fertility Indicators*. Online: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/DEMO\\_FIND\\_\\_custom\\_7219689/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/DEMO_FIND__custom_7219689/default/table?lang=en)
- Eurostat (s. a.c): *Total Fertility Rate*. Online: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00199/default/table?lang=en>
- Government of Hungary (2011): *A magyar EU-elnökség prioritásai*. [The Priorities of the Hungarian EU Presidency] Online: <https://2010-2014.kormany.hu/download/a/d1/10000/A%20magyar%20EU-elnc3%B6ks%C3%A9g%20priorit%C3%A1sai.pdf>
- Hungarian Central Statistical Office (s. a.): *A világ népessége régiók szerint, 1950–2100*. Online: [www.ksh.hu/interaktiv/grafikonok/vilag\\_nepessege.html](http://www.ksh.hu/interaktiv/grafikonok/vilag_nepessege.html)
- Judgment of the Court of 16 June 2022 in Case C-328/20 European Commission v. Republic of Austria. Online: <https://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=260986&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=1100>
- Malteser (2021): *Malteser Migration Report*. Online: [www.malteser.de/fileadmin/Files\\_sites/malteser\\_de\\_Relaunch/Angebote\\_und\\_Leistungen/Migrationsbericht/2021/Malteser-Migration-Report-2021.pdf](http://www.malteser.de/fileadmin/Files_sites/malteser_de_Relaunch/Angebote_und_Leistungen/Migrationsbericht/2021/Malteser-Migration-Report-2021.pdf)
- Open Method of Coordination (s. a.). Online: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/open-method-of-coordination.html>

Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions – Demographic change: proposals on measuring and tackling its negative effects in the EU regions. OJ C 440, 18.12.2020, 33–41.

Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions – The EU response to the demographic challenge. OJ C 218, 18.1.2017, 40–45.

Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on “The role of family policy in relation to demographic change with a view to sharing best practices among Member States” (exploratory opinion). OJ C 218, 7.23.2011, 7–13.

Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the coordination of social security systems. OJ L 200, 7.6.2004, 1–86.

United Nations (2022): *World Population Prospects 2022*. Online: <https://population.un.org/wpp/>