



## CAN WE IDENTIFY INTERGENERATIONAL POLICY REGIMES IN EUROPE?

Chiara Saraceno & Wolfgang Keck

To cite this article: Chiara Saraceno & Wolfgang Keck (2010) CAN WE IDENTIFY INTERGENERATIONAL POLICY REGIMES IN EUROPE?, *European Societies*, 12:5, 675-696, DOI: [10.1080/14616696.2010.483006](https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2010.483006)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2010.483006>



Published online: 25 Jun 2010.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 2573



View related articles [↗](#)



Citing articles: 79 View citing articles [↗](#)

# CAN WE IDENTIFY INTERGENERATIONAL POLICY REGIMES IN EUROPE?<sup>1</sup>

**Chiara Saraceno and Wolfgang Keck**

WZB, DWS, Reichpietschufer, Berlin, Germany

**ABSTRACT:** This paper examines whether it is possible to recognise specific patterns of institutionally regulated downward (towards children) and upward (towards the old) intergenerational obligations with regard to care and financial support, and to identify specific country profiles and clusters of countries in Europe. Based on the three-fold conceptualisation of familism by default, supported familism and de-familialisation, and using a complex set of indicators, we describe how countries, by means of policies, allocate intergenerational responsibilities between families and the state, also paying attention to their gender impact. The study includes all 27 EU countries and for the first time offers a comparative overview of a diversified set of policies with regard to both children and the old. It concludes that although specific policy profiles emerge with regard to the two sets of obligations, these do not always coincide. Furthermore, contrary to widespread opinion, supported familism and de-familialisation are not always contrasting policy approaches. In some countries, they actually represent part of an integrated approach to public support of intergenerational obligations. Moreover, the gender impact of supported familism may be different and even contrary, depending on the specific instrument. Finally, once the road of oversimplification is excluded, only one statistically sound cluster of countries emerges. It is, however, possible to detect groups of countries that are similar. These only partly overlap with prevalent welfare regime types.

**Key words:** intergenerational obligations; intergenerational regimes; social policies; care; transfers; gender

1. This paper is the outcome of work performed within the EU-funded MULTILINKS project. The broader theoretical approach and the description of indicators' conceptual framework may be found in Saraceno and Keck (2008).

## 1. Premise

In this article, we examine how social policies and civil law regulate the division of public and family care and financial responsibilities towards the very young and the old in the 27 European Union countries. Our work develops the pioneering study by Anttonen and Sipilä (1996) in three respects: it includes all present EU countries; it distinguishes between levels and modes of coverage; and, combining Anttonen and Sipilä's approach with that of Millar and Warman (1996) on family obligations, it considers not only policies, but also civil law regulations.

In the following, we first present our conceptual framework and describe the indicators and methods used. We then present and discuss our results – separately for downward and upward obligations. In the conclusion, we argue that although only 'weak' intergenerational regime types may be identified, our conceptual framework allows us to detect important cross-country as well as intra-country differences.

## 2. A conceptual framework for identifying institutional patterns of intergenerational obligations

The existence of a 'welfare mix' is obvious when intergenerational relations are examined. Intergenerational responsibilities are, in fact, shaped and implemented at the interface between collective and private forms of provision, both in the form of care and financial support (Lewis 1998; Anttonen *et al.* 2003). In order to understand the division of intergenerational responsibilities between the state and the family, elaborating on Korpi's (2000), Leitner's (2003), Leitner and Lessenich's (2007) and Saraceno's (2004, 2010) conceptual frameworks, we propose a distinction between four different patterns along the familialism/de-familialisation continuum: (1) *Familialism by default*, or unsupported familialism, when there are neither publicly provided alternatives to, nor financial support for family care. This dimension can be implicit, but also explicit, as in the case of financial obligations within the generational chain and kinship networks prescribed by law. (2) *Supported familialism*, when policies, usually through financial transfers – including taxation and paid leaves – support (specific) family members in keeping up their financial and care responsibilities. (3) *De-familialisation*, when individualisation of social rights (e.g., with regard to minimum income provision, or entitlement to higher education or to receiving care) reduces family responsibilities and dependencies. There may also be a fourth variant that

offers an option between supported familialism and de-familialisation, but this is a rare case.

In principle, de-familialisation may occur through both state (or state-financed) and market provisions. The two paths to de-familialisation do not, however, have the same conceptual status, not only from the point of view of social justice, but also with regard to the role assigned to the family. Recourse to the services market is inevitably mediated by family resources. De-familialisation via the market may be the result both of familialism by default and of supported familialism. De-familialisation may also occur through volunteer and third-sector intervention. In many countries, these are an important part of the overall welfare mix. If they are formally integrated into public policies, as happens for instance in the case of care services provided in the context of long-term care insurance in Germany, we include them in the system of public provision. Otherwise, we consider them as intervening in the area left to familialism by default.

It is important to clarify that de-familialisation, particularly in the case of children, is never total. Furthermore, the meaning and extent of acceptable de-familialisation in the case of young children and old people may differ. Finally, as many studies have documented, de-familialisation does not stand in contrast to family and intergenerational feelings of responsibility and solidarity (e.g., Künemund and Rein 1999; Keck 2008; Künemund 2008).

In general, the higher the degree of familialism by default, the higher are not only family intergenerational responsibilities, but also their gender specificity, with women being prevalently responsible for care and men for financial support. To a lesser degree, this may also happen with supported familialism (also see Korpi 2000), in so far as, given prevalent gender scripts and division of labour, women rather than men are more likely to take advantage of leave and of different care allowances. Supported familialism, however, may also offer incentives for rebalancing gender responsibilities in childcare. This is the case when fathers are encouraged to take parental leave by policies that specifically reserve a quota of leave time for the male parent.

### **3. Indicators and method**

In order to operationalise our conceptual framework, we consider the following dimensions: (a) to what degree and in what circumstances do parents have full responsibility for the cost of children as consumers of goods and to what degree and in what circumstances is part of this responsibility taken on by the state through public transfers? (b) To what degree do mothers and fathers have full responsibility to provide childcare

for children up to 6 years of age and to what degree and in which form (supported familialism or services) is part of this responsibility taken on directly or indirectly by the state?<sup>2</sup> (c) To what degree are the elderly entitled to a minimum pension irrespective of their work history, and, by contrast, to what degree is their financial support, in cases of need, more or less explicitly their children's responsibility? (d) To what degree are the (non-health) care needs of older people left to their own and their family's (spouses' and children's) resources and to what degree and by what means (services or payments for care) is responsibility for these taken on by the state?

The indicators we selected for the first dimension are child allowances and child-related tax allowances.<sup>3</sup> We also considered the legal age at which the financial obligations of parents end. For the second dimension, we selected the duration and level of compensation, respectively, of maternity and parental leave, whether fathers are encouraged to take parental leave and in what form, and childcare coverage through services for children aged under three and children aged three to six, respectively. For the third dimension, we considered the existence and conditions of a minimum non-contributory pension and the level of income it grants, as well as the presence or absence of legally prescribed financial obligations on children towards their parents. Finally, for the fourth dimension, we considered the coverage (in respect of the total elderly population) offered by residential and homecare services. We also examined whether there are care allowances for family carers and how these are regulated, in order to be able to distinguish between forms of supported or optional familialism and forms of de-familialisation or supported commodification. Unfortunately, however, information on this last indicator is not sufficiently robust in a comparative perspective.

Given the complexity and heterogeneity of the relevant indicators and the difficulty in comparing them,<sup>4</sup> we decided not to use synthetic indexes. Although such indexes provide easy-to-read figures, in most cases they hide the underlying complexity and tend to oversimplify the data, without providing reliable and robust measures (see Atkinson *et al.* 2002;

2. We are aware, of course, that caring needs of children do not stop when they turn or when they enter school. But the age bracket we consider is that where care needs are more intensive and presence of non family care more different, and controversial, across countries (see also Saraceno forthcoming)

3. The data for the indicators were collected through a variety of comparative and national sources, in many cases also with the help of national informants. For the conceptualisation of indicators, see Saraceno and Keck (2008); for the methodology in constructing them and the sources used, see Keck *et al.* (2009).

4. On the 'dependent variable problem' in comparative research, see, e.g., Clasen and Siegel (2007).

Scruggs and Allan 2008). We therefore keep each indicator distinct and consider the provisions and obligations towards children and the elderly separately. Subsequently, we verify whether within-country patterns of support along the familialism/de-familialisation continuum are similar or, on the contrary, different for the two directions of obligations.

In order to verify whether countries might be grouped in distinct clusters on the basis of their overall policy approach, we implemented both cluster analysis and qualitative comparative analysis (QCA), based on the fuzzy-set approach (Ragin 2000). Having run several variants of cluster analysis, however, we found only one robust country cluster. The fuzzy-set analysis proved to be very sensitive to the definition of the turning point of 0.5, at which an observation is more inside or outside the set of characteristics. A large number of countries were separated into different configurations, although they are very similar. Moreover, fuzzy-set configurations only allow a dichotomous split of the observations into insiders and outsiders of the set characteristics. Considering that for most of the indicators we used, a large share of the countries is located around the cross-country mean, the result is an agglomeration of cases into just a few configurations, depending on whether the high proportion of observations dispersed around the mean value is ascribed to the set or not. For these reasons, we do not use the results of these analyses here. Rather, we present the country-specific intergenerational policy profiles that emerge regarding responsibilities towards children and towards the elderly, respectively, and as regards their combination. Although partial cross-country similarities may be detected, we avoid forcing them into actual clusters distinguished by clear-cut regime types.

Countries are ranked according to the relative distribution of the indicators for all countries. The ranking of a country as low, medium or high in a particular dimension is based on the mean and the standard deviation (STD) of the respective indicator. 'Low' means that the country figure is lower than 0.5 STD below the mean. 'Medium' means that the country figure is between 0.5 STD below and 0.5 STD above the mean. 'High' means that the country rate is higher than 0.5 STD above the mean. Indicators on financial benefits are always related to the average net earnings in the country.

#### **4. Responsibilities towards children**

Responsibilities towards children refer to the need to provide both care and financial means. Care may be provided to children of preschool age by the family without any kind of public support (familialism by default), by the family with financial support, as in the case of maternity and parental

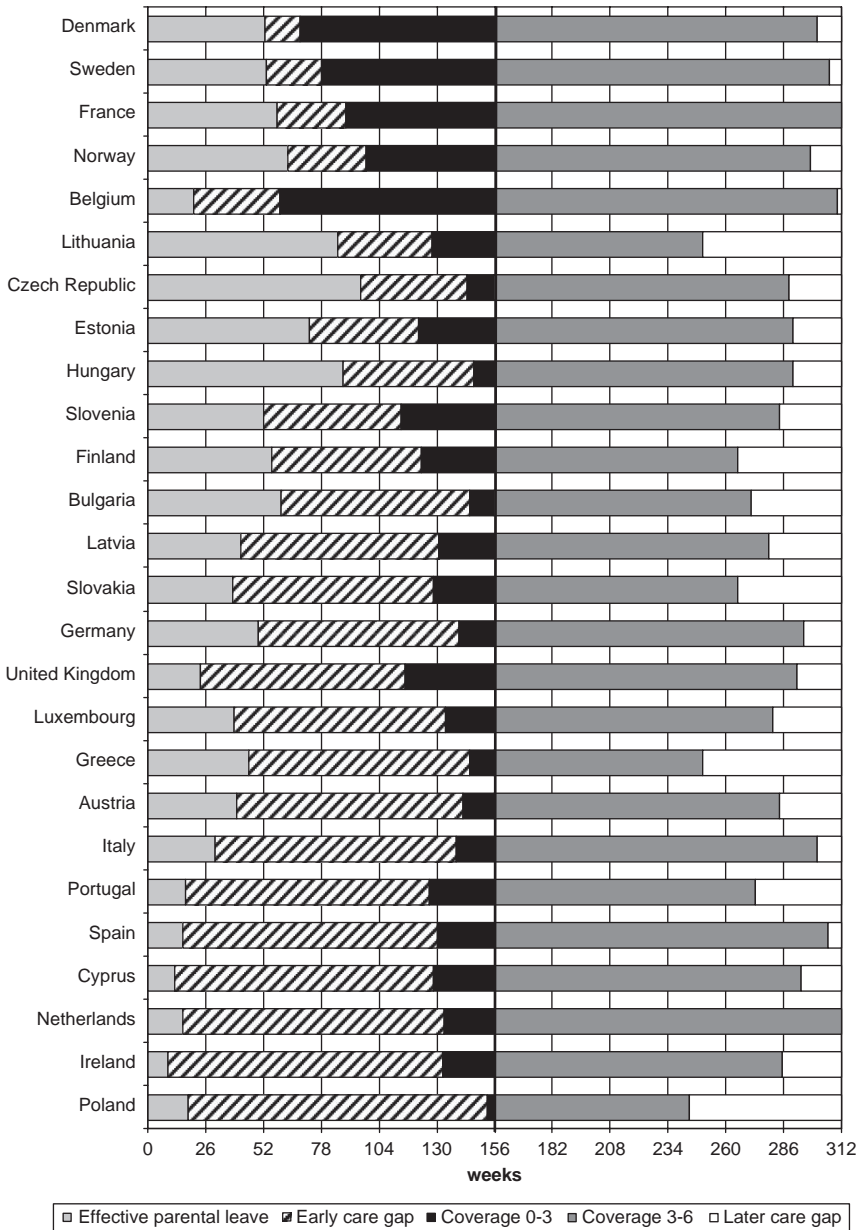
leave (supported familialism), or partly by the family and partly by publicly supported services (partial de-familialisation). These different forms may also occur in sequence, depending on the children's age.

Three aspects of maternity and parental leave are relevant for our analysis: duration, level of income replacement, and whether fathers are entitled to it and in what form (e.g., whether there is a 'take it or leave it' reserved quota or other specific incentive).<sup>5</sup> Length of leave and income replacement are two quite distinct dimensions. In order to assess the degree to which family care is actively supported through public resources, following Plantenga *et al.* (2007), we construct an indicator of 'effective parental leave': the length of paid maternity and parental leave in weeks is weighted by the income replacement rate (measured in relation to the average net wage).<sup>6</sup> In all countries, leaves only concern officially working parents. In some countries, there may be a flat-rate, means-tested measure targeted at non-working mothers in low-income households for a period equivalent to the duration of maternity leave.

In order to measure the degree of de-familialisation through the provision of services, we take the coverage rates for children aged under three and aged three to six, respectively.<sup>7</sup> We translate them into a time measure by calculating the number of weeks each child in the respective age bracket might attend a (publicly supported) childcare facility based on the available places.

Figure 1 presents the time covered by each of these three policy measures and the remaining un- or undersupported time left to what we define as familialism by default. Countries are ranked according to their

5. We only consider fathers' entitlement to parental leave, not the few days of paternity leave that fathers may take in many countries soon after childbirth.
6. Deviating from Plantenga *et al.* (2007), we have chosen the average and not the minimum wage, as we believe it offers a more realistic approximation of the actual compensation rate.
7. Statistics on childcare provisions should be interpreted with caution (Eurostat 2004). Coverage rates may depend on the types of care provision that are considered in a given source. Also, the distinction between market and public (or publicly financed) services is not always clear in the sources and sometimes also difficult to detect in practice. We are also aware that in some countries (i.e. Germany or The Netherlands) childcare services are often part time. This means that they can serve a higher percentage of children, for fewer hours/days (as in The Netherlands), or cover only part of the day (as in Germany). Due to lack of comparable and exhaustive information on these aspects, however, we have treated each childcare place as being potentially used by one child only, without distinguishing between part and full time use. In some countries – Ireland, Malta, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom – compulsory schooling starts before the age of six. In these cases, we assume a 100 percent coverage rate for the age brackets under six of compulsory school age in that country.



**Figure 1.** Distribution of caring responsibilities towards children aged up to six (2004–2007).

Sources: Various. See Keck *et al.* (2009). Malta and Romania are not included because of a lack of data on childcare for the under-threes. Malta has a short, and Romania a medium effective parental leave, and both have low childcare coverage for children aged over three.



overall childcare support for children aged under three – through supported familialism or de-familialisation. Not surprisingly, since we are considering children up to school age, what makes the largest difference in overall coverage is the degree of de-familialisation, not that of supported familialism. Even in the countries with the longest effective parental leave, in fact, this amounts to less than 3 years.

Three groups may be distinguished. First, there is a group of countries with high de-familialisation through public childcare services. This group includes the Scandinavian countries and Belgium and France. With the exception of Belgium, these countries also have a substantial – around 1 year – period of supported familialism through paid parental leave. Belgium, Norway and Sweden reserve a quota of parental leave for each partner, thus providing incentives for fathers to take on caring responsibilities if parents wish to take full advantage of the available paid leave time. In this perspective, we may speak of supported familialisation for both fathers and mothers. In Denmark and France, there is no reserved quota.

The second group of countries is characterised by long and generously paid periods of parental leave. This group comprises only countries from Central and Eastern Europe: Estonia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania and Bulgaria, with the first three having the longest effective leave. In all of these countries, there is no quota of parental leave reserved for fathers, thus no encouragement for a rebalancing of gender responsibilities in childcare. In addition, in some of these countries, another relative can take the leave instead of the parent, accentuating the supported familialism aspect of this policy approach. Childcare coverage for children under three is low overall in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Lithuania, and moderate in the other two countries. Finland is a special case, located somewhat between these two groups. In addition to parental leave, there is also (as in Norway) the option of a child-rearing benefit, which is paid to parents who decide to stay home until their child is three. At the same time, there is a legal right to a place in childcare as soon as the child is 10 months old. Hence, Finland seems to offer an option between supported familialism and de-familialisation, as suggested indirectly by Anttonen *et al.* (2003) and Gilbert (2008). Childcare coverage for both toddlers and children aged three to six, however, is low to moderate (and school age starts at 7). The child-rearing benefit is nearer the social assistance benefit than to the average wage. Both actual choice and financial support seem to be limited. Furthermore, there is no specific incentive for fathers to take part of the leave.

The third group of countries is characterised by low public support in any form, in particular for children aged under three. These countries are, therefore, characterised by a high degree of familialism by default. This

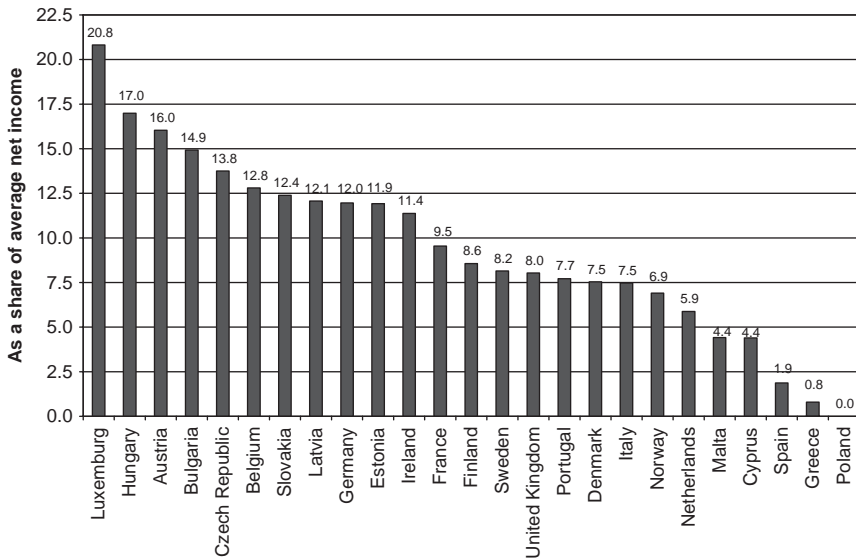
group is highly heterogeneous, including countries such as Greece, Poland and Portugal, which have low coverage rates for children both under and over three, and countries such as Cyprus, Italy, The Netherlands and Spain, which have almost universal childcare provision starting from the age of three. Ireland is also close to this group, with a high degree of familialism by default with regard to care for the very young and medium-range childcare coverage for 3–6-year-olds, mostly due to an early (at age four) school age. In this group of countries, only in Italy and Portugal is there an incentive for fathers to take part of the leave; but the low level of compensation acts as a disincentive.

The last group comprises Austria, Germany, Latvia, Luxembourg, Slovakia, Slovenia and the United Kingdom. These countries have medium coverage in some form for children aged under three and, with the exception of Slovakia, also medium public childcare provision for children aged three to six. In Luxembourg, and since 2007 in Germany, a quota of the leave is reserved for fathers.

Child-related income transfers may be interpreted as a form of supported familialism, helping parents in their role as income providers. In most, but not all, European countries, these benefits are granted to all families with young children, independent of the household income. Among the variety of benefits, tax allowances and credits for families with children (Bradshaw 2006), we consider only periodical, child-linked cash transfers and tax allowances. Both in taxation and in child benefits, different criteria may be used to take account of the number and age of children, as well as of different household types (e.g., dual-parent and lone-parent households). For the sake of comparison, we calculated (on the basis of the Euromod tax-benefit model published by Eurostat) the additional disposable income provided by the combination of direct child benefits and tax allowances for a dual-parent household with two young children and an income of 133 percent ( $100 + 33$ ) of national average income, compared to a couple with the same income but without children (Figure 2). We are aware that the picture we present here is no more than a snapshot focusing on a standard family type. Individual countries may be more generous towards large households or lone-parent households.<sup>8</sup>

Cross-country variation with respect to financial support is smaller than the variation regarding income support during maternity and parental leave. At the lower end of financial support there are both countries which provide income-tested or categorical support – such as Cyprus, Greece,

8. Bradshaw (2006) and Fagnani and Math (2007) have calculated the support received by 16 different kinds of households, differentiated by composition, income level, number of earners and so forth, for a limited number of (Western European) countries.



**Figure 2.** Public financial support for a couple with two children, by country (2004). *Note:* The amount of support is calculated as the sum of tax allowances and transfers a couple with two children receives compared to a couple without children. Both couples have the same income of 133 percent of the average income. Data for Romania and Slovenia are missing. We did not consider Lithuania due to inconsistency in the data. It should be considered that in Italy only waged workers may receive such support – on the basis of an income test. *Source:* Eurostat (2009), authors' calculations.

Spain and Poland – and countries with universal schemes but with low levels of support, such as Malta and The Netherlands.

At the opposite end, Luxembourg stands out as the most generous country, followed by Hungary, Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Belgium, Slovakia, Germany and Estonia.

In 14 countries – Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, The Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden and the United Kingdom – there is a maximum age above which parents no longer have any legal obligation to provide for their children. This age is usually 18, but in most of these countries it can be raised if the child is still in education. In the remaining countries,<sup>9</sup> obligations persist until the child reaches economic independence (European Judicial Network 2009 and national informants).

If we look at the overall support provided to families with children, it is apparent that all countries offer a combination of supported familialism

<sup>9</sup> Data on Cyprus are missing.

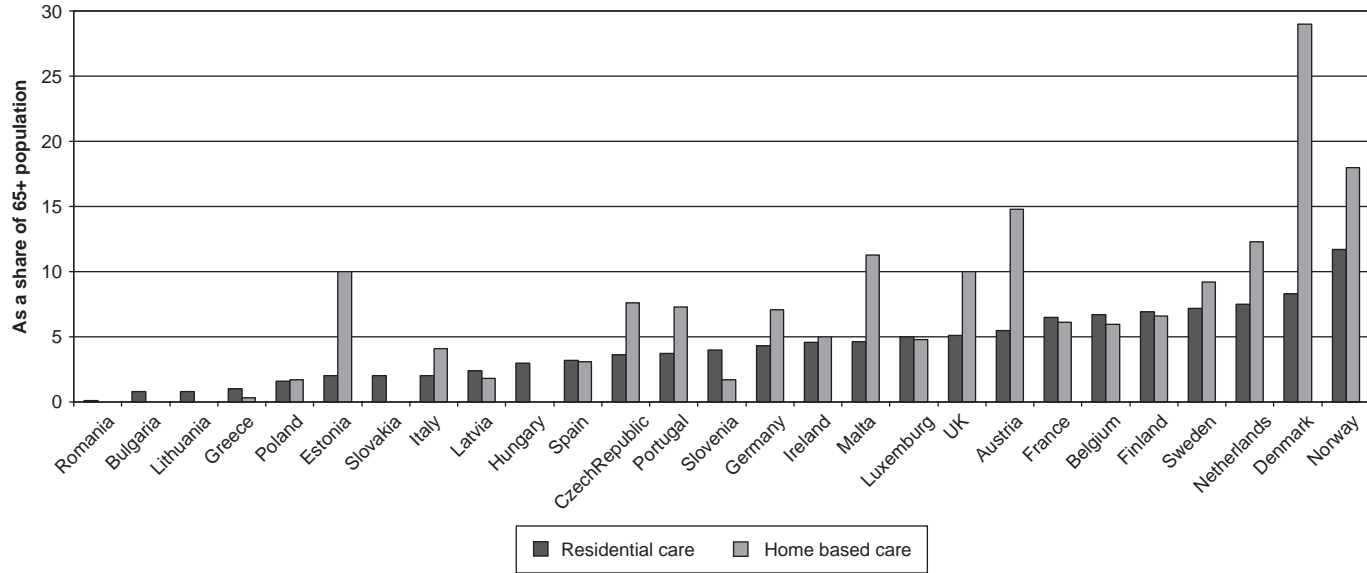
and de-familialisation. However, both the combination and the intensity of these two forms differ, leading to different patterns of intergenerational family obligations. Denmark, France, Sweden and Norway offer high to medium support via both de-familialisation and supported familialism. Belgium differs from these countries since it offers low support to parents caring for infant children. Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary and Slovakia have high levels of supported familialisation, and low to medium levels of de-familialisation. In Estonia, Latvia and Slovenia, there is a medium level of de-familialisation of care. In the remaining countries, the space left to familialism by default is greater at all levels, although with internal variations. This group comprises all the Mediterranean countries, as well as Poland, The Netherlands and Ireland. Austria, Finland, Germany, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom occupy a middle position in almost all dimensions

## 5. Responsibilities towards the old

Responsibilities towards the elderly can concern conditions of physical or mental dependency, or insufficient income. Public policies may allocate to the state all or part of these responsibilities. They may also explicitly prescribe family obligations in this area in the form of a definition of 'obliged kin'.

With regard to (non-health) care policy, in principle three important dimensions should be considered for our purposes. The first is whether (non-health) support is income tested or universal. The second is the threshold of dependency above which one is entitled to receive support. The third is how much of the individual need is covered. These dimensions define who is entitled and under which conditions, and what is left to his/her own and family resources. These dimensions can, therefore, be used as a first indicator of the degree of de-familialisation versus familialism by default. Two other important dimensions of programme design must be added: whether support is offered in kind or in money or via a combination of the two (also see Jensen 2008); and, when monetary support is provided, whether there are specific rules as to how it should be spent. These two further dimensions allow us to distinguish between de-familialisation via publicly provided services, de-familialisation via market services supported by public money, and supported familialism.

Unfortunately, no sound comparative data exist for all these dimensions. Figure 3, based on existing comparative sources integrated with national sources (often with the help of informants), gives only a very general idea of diversities in the degree as well as the composition of public efforts in



**Figure 3.** Service provision for elderly care.

*Note:* No information for Cyprus. No data for home-based services are available from Romania, Bulgaria, Russia, Slovakia and Hungary. In all of these countries, national experts have reported that the public social-service sector for the elderly is not developed. Therefore, the rates are likely to be in a lower range.

*Sources:* National reports of the Eurofamcare project, STAKES, OECD (2005) and national informants, various years (1999–2007). See Keck *et al.* (2009).

care provision. Furthermore, the coverage rates of care services for older people cannot be calculated as clearly as in the case of childcare provision. If and when an older person needs care or financial support depends on his/her personal, gendered and cohort-specific biography, not on whether he/she has reached a particular age.

Only the Nordic countries and The Netherlands have comparatively high levels of both residential and homecare, with Denmark and Norway being clear outliers in the degree of de-familialisation, followed at a great distance by The Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Belgium and France. Among the other countries, Estonia,<sup>10</sup> Austria, Malta and the United Kingdom stand out as having comparatively high homecare coverage, followed by Germany, the Czech Republic and Portugal. In most of the Central and Eastern European EU member states, but also in Greece, Italy and Spain, coverage is minimal and therefore the degree of familialism by default is high. There is an unfortunate lack of information on the intensity of care provided by these services, particularly in the case of home services. We agree with Rauch (2007) that this information would be necessary to assess the actual degree of de-familialisation, as in the case of childcare. Yet, in order to obtain this information, detailed studies of each country would be necessary, grasping the complexity of rules that not only vary across countries and even regions or municipalities, but also with the degree of dependence. Existing studies, including OECD (2005) and Rauch (2007), as well as our national informants suggest that, when only homecare is considered, intensity is comparatively high in the Scandinavian countries, Finland and The Netherlands, and low to very low in most other countries.

Cash-for-care allowances exist in several countries, although under different conditions. In some cases, they are meant to substitute services, in others to pay for services of one's own choice; or, as in the case of Germany, an option may be given between receiving cash or services. Allowances may be more or less generous, flat rate or varying with the degree of dependence. In most countries, they are paid to the care-dependent person, but in some (e.g., the United Kingdom) they are paid directly to the family carer (see, e.g., Ungerson 2004; Timonen *et al.* 2006; Pavolini and Ranci 2008). Looking at Figure 3 and Table 1 together, it seems that cash-for-care allowances bound to buying care favour the development of home services more than those that are not bound to any particular use. Since not all the necessary details concerning the different features of care allowances are available for all countries, we cannot really

10. The Estonian figure on home-based care, provided by our national informants, seems to be very high compared to all other Central and Eastern European Countries.

**TABLE 1. Cash-for-care payments (2003/04)**

<i>Cash-for-care payments</i>	<i>Countries</i>
No	Greece, Latvia
Yes, unbound	Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain
Yes, formally bound	Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherland, Norway, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, United Kingdom

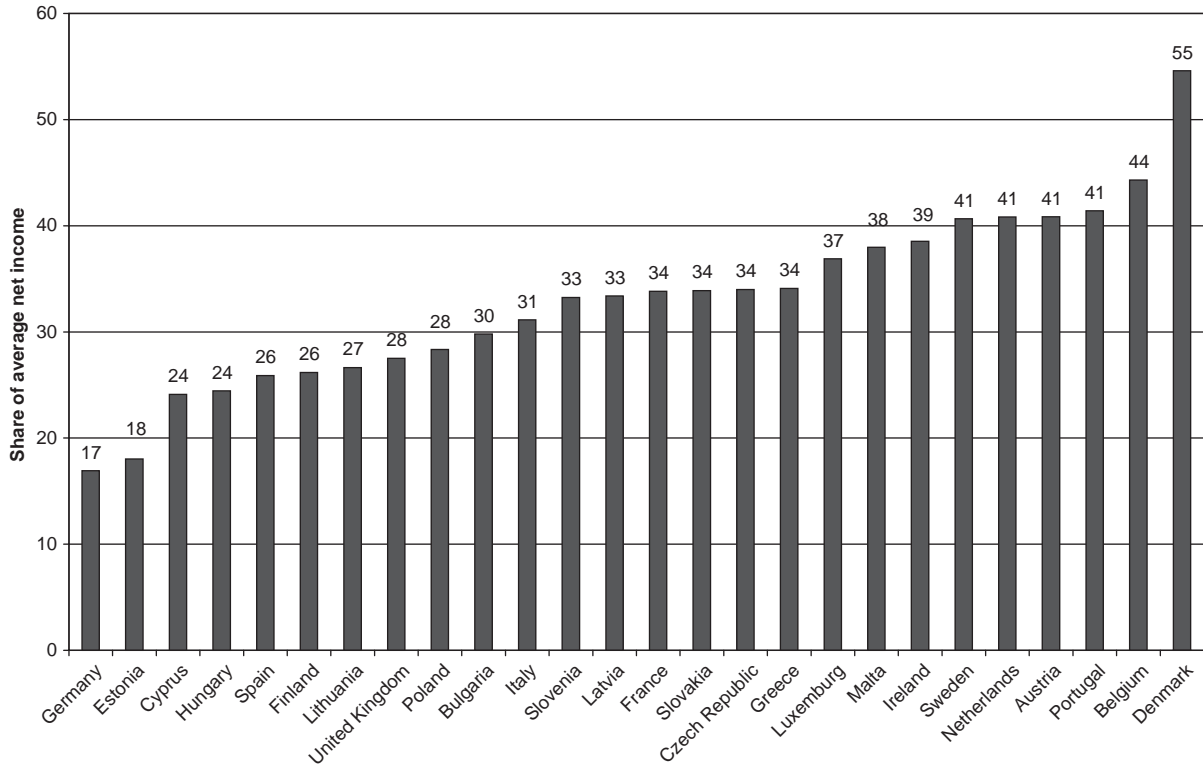
*Note:* National informants say that in Spain such allowances should in principle be used to pay for services, but since the offer of services is still low, a range of discretion is allowed. The same seems to apply in Portugal.

evaluate their impact and their status in the familialism/de-familialisation continuum. Generally, cash for care not bound by constraints may result both in supported familialism and in unregulated marketisation, as in the case of the migrant market of care in Italy.

Unlike child allowances, we consider public financial support for pensioners a form of de-familialisation, in so far as it is aimed at granting the old financial autonomy. Specific minimum income provisions for the old exist in all EU countries, including those where children have a legal obligation to provide financially for their parents in cases of need. This obligation exists in the majority of the countries considered. It does not exist in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Norway, Sweden or the United Kingdom (European Judicial Network 2009 and national informants).<sup>11</sup> Apparently, however, this obligation intervenes only on top of the minimum pension provision and it is mostly called upon when the payment of care services is at issue.

Minimum old-age pensions may be part of a universal basic pension provision, as in Denmark, or be a social assistance measure. The distribution by level of generosity (Figure 4) is quite different from that found in the case of child allowances, and in several cases even the opposite. Malta and The Netherlands provide low financial support for children, but offer generous minimum security in old age. In Estonia, Germany and Hungary, the picture is reversed: low minimum pensions contrast with high public transfers for children. None of the Central and Eastern member states of the EU provides high financial support for the old; and only the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia rank in a middle position. In the Nordic countries, Denmark and Sweden provide high, and Finland low minimum pension benefits. As in the case of children, some of the poorer countries provide better coverage than some of their richer

<sup>11</sup> Data for Cyprus are missing.



**Figure 4.** Minimum pension provision as a share of average net income (2006).

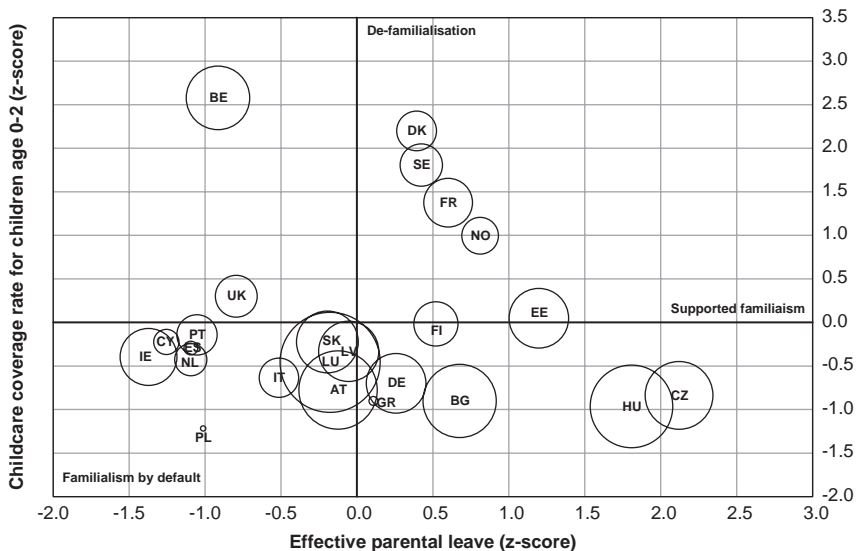


neighbours. Countries differ, however, in the incidence of the old requiring a minimum pension, as well as in the incidence of poverty among the old.

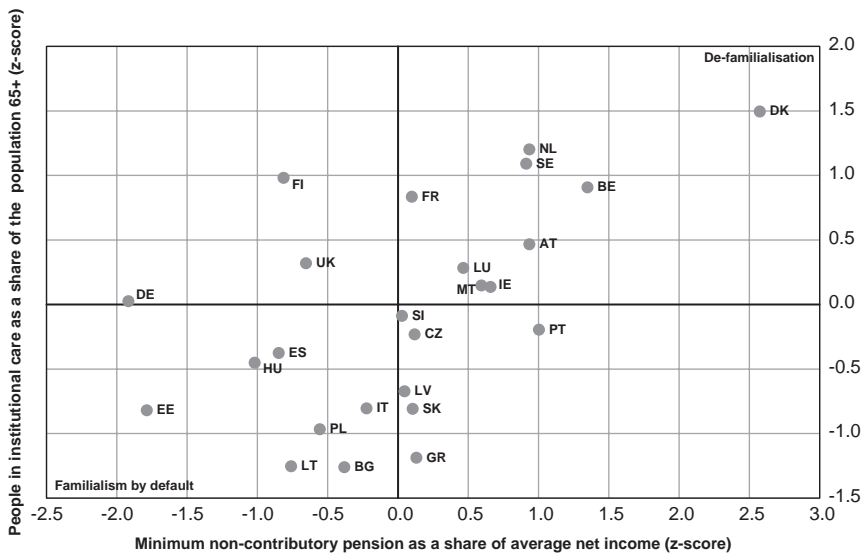
**6. Conclusion: country-specific intergenerational policy regimes, but no clear country clusters**

We have explored how public policies and legal frameworks shape intergenerational responsibilities between the state and the family and whether specific intergenerational regimes may be identified along three dimensions: familialism by default, supported familialism and de-familialisation. Given the different availability of adequately comparable indicators, however, we have been able to assess the degree of supported familialism more precisely for obligations toward children than towards the old.

In all countries, a combination of the three policy approaches is present with regard to both downward and upward obligations. But there is substantial variation not only across countries, but across areas of need and kinds of obligations, as shown in the Synopses in Figures 5 and 6.



**Figure 5.** Synopsis: responsibilities for children.  
 Note: The circles represent the extent of public financial support for families with children. The larger the diameter, the higher the direct and indirect family transfers (for details, see Figure 2).



**Figure 6.** Synopsis: responsibilities for the elderly.

Very few countries show a similar approach in both downward and upward obligations and with respect to care and financial support. Thus, at the individual country level, policy regimes are mostly mixed and in some cases located at the opposite side of the familialism/de-familialisation spectrum, depending on whether children or the elderly are involved. And few countries may be grouped together as having similar approaches across all, or most dimensions.

The absence of an overarching intra-country policy approach in most of the countries is not surprising, for at least two reasons. First, children and the elderly have a different legal and social status. Individualisation of entitlements is greater for the latter than for the former. Furthermore, young children may not be totally and not even largely de-familialised without depriving them of the possibility to develop meaningful and loving relationships. Second, different policy instruments often belong to different policy settings and depend on different institutional actors. In addition, the various policy instruments have been introduced at quite different points in time.

These different factors explain why it is difficult to detect both fully coherent policy profiles and robust country clusters characterised by similar policy approaches. It is, however, possible to identify similarities, as shown in Figures 5 and 6. These illustrate the distribution of countries along three dimensions concerning obligations towards

children (leaves, childcare coverage for children aged under three and child-related income transfers)<sup>12</sup> and two dimensions concerning obligations towards the elderly (minimum pension and care services), respectively. This distribution only very partly overlaps with prevalent welfare regime types.

A distinct group (the only one that can be identified robustly through cluster analysis) includes the Scandinavian countries plus France. It is characterised by a high degree of de-familialisation with regard to both sets of obligations, but also, in the case of young children, of supported familialism. Belgium differs from this group because its supported familialism in presence of children is skewed towards financial support rather than parental leave. In the Scandinavian countries, de-familialisation is also inscribed in civil law, in so far as legal obligations to provide support are restricted to parents of underage children only.

An opposite group of countries is characterised by a high degree of familialism by default with regard to both obligations. It comprises Poland, Italy, Spain, Greece and Bulgaria. Latvia and Slovakia are also close to this profile, although they are more generous in one or another dimension. Portugal is an outlier in this group, due to the higher level of de-familialisation for the old. All these countries also have cash-for-care measures for the old, with no limitation on its use (a form of implicit supported familialism).

Hungary and the Czech Republic, followed by Estonia, have the highest degree of supported familialism through both leaves and transfers in the case of children. But in the case of the old, they are nearer to the familialism by default approach. In the case of Estonia and the Czech Republic, however, the relatively high coverage through homecare and the provision of cash for care bound to hiring a carer (not considered in the chart), respectively, point to a de-familialisation trend in the case of the old. Austria, The Netherlands, Ireland and Luxembourg are in the de-familialisation quadrant with regard to the old, but in the familialism by default quadrant with regard to children, although Austria and Ireland

12. For the sake of simplicity, we excluded services for children aged over three, because cross-country differences in this field are less relevant. In all countries, childcare or school places are available for the majority of children aged three to six years and only in four countries are coverage rates below 70 percent. In the case of the elderly, we considered only institutional care because information on homecare was missing for too many countries. We know, however, that there is usually a positive correlation between the two. The exception is Estonia, where homecare is relatively high, while institutional care is low. We also had to exclude cash for care in the chart because the available information is not always precise or comparable with respect to amounts and criteria for entitlement. Notwithstanding this simplification of indicators, not all countries can be included in each chart because of missing information.

provide generous child transfers. Germany and the United Kingdom are just outside the familialism by default quadrant with regard to both sets of obligations, with Germany characterised by a higher degree of supported familialisation for children (and partly the old, through the option of cash for care, not considered in the chart), and the United Kingdom characterised by a higher degree of de-familialisation in both cases.

From this complex picture, some indications emerge on how inter-generational obligations are framed in the European countries. First, with regard to small children, there seems to be a convergence towards a shared family-state responsibility through a mixture of supported familialism (leaves and child benefits) and partial de-familialisation. Distinctions concern length and compensation of parental leave, as well as incentives for fathers to take a share of it: that is, duration and gender specificity of supported familialism in the area of childcare and, symmetrically, degree of (partial) de-familialisation for very young children. Interestingly, the countries with the longest durations of leave do not offer any encouragement to fathers to take it, thus de facto encouraging a feminisation of childcare responsibilities which is very similar to that implicit in familialism by default. Second, the care needs of the old seem to be less acknowledged overall as a public responsibility than those of children. At the same time, financial autonomy is less universally granted to the old than one might expect. Furthermore, family care is also less clearly supported in their case. In many countries, there is no specific financial support for family carers. And the leave instrument, which is the cornerstone of supported familialism in the case of children, exists in only a few countries – Austria, Belgium, Germany and Italy – in the case of care for an old relative and is mostly unpaid. This is partly due to the fact that until now most frail elderly have been cared for by another family member outside the labour force – a spouse or a daughter aged over fifty. But the rise in women's labour force participation and in the statutory retirement age will render this instrument increasingly necessary.

Overall, the relatively higher individualisation of the old and of their social entitlements may paradoxically result in a lower social acknowledgement of their care needs, as indicated by the high number of countries that have both very little service care provision and no, or a very limited, form of supported familialism through cash-for-care provision.

## References

- Anttonen, A. and Sipilä, J. (1996) 'European social care services: Is it possible to identify models?', *Journal of European Social Policy* 2: 87–100.

- Anttonen, A., Baldock, J. and Sipilä, J. (eds) (2003) *The Young, The Old and the State*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Atkinson, T., Cantillon, B., Marlier, E. and Nolan, B. (2002) *Social Indicators. The EU and Social Inclusion*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bradshaw, J. (2006) 'Child benefit packages in 15 countries in 2004', in J. Lewis (ed.), *Children. Changing Families and Welfare States*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp. 26–50.
- Clasen, J. and Siegel, N. A. (2007) 'Comparative welfare state analysis and the "dependent variable problem"', in J. Clasen and N. A. Siegel (eds), *Investigating Welfare State Change*, Edward Elgar: Cheltenham, pp. 3–12.
- European Commission (2006) *Minimum Income Provision for Older People and Their Contribution to Adequacy in Retirement. Special Pension Study*, [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/spsi/docs/social\\_protection/SPC%20Study%20minimum%20income%20final.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_protection/SPC%20Study%20minimum%20income%20final.pdf).
- European Judicial Network (2009) 'Maintenance claims', [http://ec.europa.eu/civiljustice/parental\\_resp/parental\\_resp\\_gen\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/civiljustice/parental_resp/parental_resp_gen_en.htm).
- Eurostat (2004) *Development of a Methodology for the Collection of Harmonised Statistics on Childcare*, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- Eurostat (2009) 'Eurostat online database', <http://www.eds-destatis.de/de/database/estatonline.php>.
- Fagnani, J. and Math, A. (2007) 'Policy packages for families with children in 11 European countries: Multiple approaches', in L. Arnlaug and C. Saraceno (eds), *Childhood: Changing Contexts*, Bingley: Jay Press/Emerald, pp. 55–78.
- Gilbert, N. (2008) *A Mother's Work. How Feminism, the Market and Policy Shape Family Life*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Jensen, C. (2008) 'Worlds of welfare services and transfers', *Journal of European Social Policy* 18(2): 151–62.
- Keck, W. (2008) 'The relationship between children and their frail elderly parents in different care regimes', in C. Saraceno (ed.), *Families, Ageing and Social Policy*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp. 147–69.
- Keck, W., Hessel, P. and Saraceno, C. (2009) *Data Base on Policy Indicators. Methodological Report*, <http://multilinks-project.eu/uploads/papers/0000/0016/technical-report-version-1-2.pdf>.
- Korpi, W. (2000) 'Faces of inequality: Gender, class and pattern of inequalities in different types of welfare states', *Social Politics* 7: 127–91.
- Künemund, H. (2008) 'Intergenerational relation between the family and the state', in C. Saraceno (ed.), *Families, Ageing and Social Policy*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp. 105–22.

- Künemund, H. and Rein, M. (1999) 'There is more to receiving than needing: Theoretical arguments and empirical explorations of crowding in and crowding out', *Ageing and Society* 19: 93–121.
- Leitner, S. (2003) 'Varieties of familism. The caring function of the family in comparative perspective', *European Societies* 5: 353–75.
- Leitner, S. and Lessenich, S. (2007) '(In)Dependence as a dependent variable: Conceptualizing and measuring de-familization', in J. Clasen and N. A. Siegel (eds), *Investigating Welfare State Change*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp. 244–60.
- Lewis, J. (ed.) (1998) *Gender, Social Care and Welfare State Restructuring in Europe*, Aldershot: Ashgate
- Millar, J. and Warman, A. (1996) *Family Obligations in Europe*, London: Family Policy Studies Centre.
- OECD (2005) *Long-term Care for Older People*, OECD: Paris
- Pavolini, E. and Ranci, C. (2008) 'Restructuring the welfare state: Reforms in long-term care in Western European countries', *Journal of European Social Policy* 18: 246–59.
- Plantenga, J., Remery, Ch., Siegel, M. and Sementini, L. (2007) 'Child-care services in 25 European Union Member States: The Barcelona targets revisited', in L. Arnlaug and C. Saraceno (eds), *Childhood: Changing Contexts*, Bingley: Jay Press/Emerald, pp. 27–54.
- Ragin, C. R. (2000) *Fuzzy-Set Social Science*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Rauch, D. (2007) 'Is there really a Scandinavian social service model?', *Acta Sociologica* 50: 249–69.
- Saraceno, C. (2004) 'De-familization or re-familization? Trends in income tested family benefits', in T. Knijn and A. Komter (eds), *Solidarity Between the Sexes and the Generations: Transformations in Europe*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp. 68–88.
- Saraceno, C. (2010) 'Social inequalities in facing old age dependency. A bi-generational perspective', *Journal of European Social Policy* 20(1): 1–13.
- Saraceno C. (forthcoming) 'Childcare needs and childcare policies. A multidimensional issue', *Current Sociology* 59(5).
- Saraceno, C. and Keck, W. (2008) *The Institutional Framework of Intergenerational Family Obligations in Europe: A Conceptual and Methodological Overview*, [http://www.multilinks-project.eu/uploads/papers/0000/0010/Report\\_Saraceno\\_Keck\\_Nov08.pdf](http://www.multilinks-project.eu/uploads/papers/0000/0010/Report_Saraceno_Keck_Nov08.pdf).
- Scruggs, L. and Allan, J. (2008) 'Welfare-state decommodification in 18 OECD countries: A replication and revision', *Journal of European Social Policy* 16: 55–72.
- Timonen, V., Convery, J. and Cahill, S. (2006) 'Care revolution in the making? A comparison of cash-for-care programmes in four European countries', *Ageing and Society* 26: 455–74.

Ungerson, C. (2004) 'Whose empowerment and independence? A cross-national perspective on "cash for care" schemes', *Ageing and Society* 24: 189–212.

**Chiara Saraceno**, formerly professor of sociology of family at the University of Torino, Italy, has been research professor at the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung since 2006, with the theme Demographic Development, Social Change and Social Capital. Her main research interests concern family patterns, gender, intergenerational relations, poverty, welfare state arrangements and social policies.

**Wolfgang Keck** is research assistant at the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB). His research work concerns long-term care, intergenerational relations, and social policies in comparative perspective.

**Address for correspondence:** Chiara Saraceno, WZB, DWS, Reichpietschufer 50, Berlin, D-10785 Berlin, Germany.  
E-mail: saraceno@wzb.eu