Gender mainstreaming was established as a major global strategy for the promotion of gender equality in the Beijing Platform for Action from the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Also Europe has been focusing increasing attention on gender issues, and especially on considerations on the female condition. After 10 years (and something), the evaluation of equal opportunities mainly focuses on qualification measures for unemployed women and improvements for childcare facilities, the consideration of gender mainstreaming in other policy areas as well as macro economic effects on employment and unemployment of women. Recent developments in European countries are that more and more women are joining the labour force, birth rates are declining and social policies are mainly orienting their measures towards gender equality. Whereas previously the countries with the highest period fertility rates were those in which family-oriented cultural traditions were most pronounced and in which women’s labour market participation was least, these relationships are now wholly reversed. These problems, set within a European framework of public spending cuts, make it difficult to maintain and sustain the current type of welfare state. This book focuses on the relation between family and gender mainstreaming to stress, if and how, the debate on the topic of reconciliation policies, family policies and gender issues are implemented in the European social policy systems. Each author addresses this issue in their own terms; thanks to their original approach, it is possible appreciate a variety of aspects, which intertwine in different ways but which all contribute to simplify the multidimensional framework of the relationship between gender, family and work in the European arena.

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“Our differences are our strength”

Eu Commission website
2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All
Gender mainstreaming was established as a major global strategy for the promotion of gender equality in the Beijing Platform for Action from the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Clear intergovernmental mandates for gender mainstreaming have been developed for all the major areas of the work of the United Nations, including disarmament, poverty reduction, macro-economics, health, education and trade.

Also Europe has been focusing increasing attention on gender issues, and especially on considerations on the female condition. This is the outcome of the long struggles of women and feminist movements but also of a general process whereby gender differences and their implications for people’s work and family lives have gained increased prominence.

After 10 years (and something), the evaluation of equal opportunities mainly focus on qualification measures for unemployed women and improvements for childcare facilities, on the consideration of gender mainstreaming in other policy areas as well as macro economic effects on employment and unemployment of women.

Recent developments in European countries are that more and more women are joining the labour force, birth rates are declining and social policies are mainly orienting their measures towards gender equality. Whereas previously the countries with the highest period fertility rates were those in which family-oriented cultural traditions were most pronounced and in which women’s labour market participation was least, these relationships are now wholly reversed. These problems, set within a European framework of public spending cuts, make it difficult to maintain and sustain the current type of welfare state.
Moreover, women’s emancipation process and the improvement of the female condition through the mass entry of women into the workforce – according also to the indications of the 2000 Lisbon Declaration\(^1\) – not only had an impact on the increase of school enrolment rates but, importantly, it also led to the entry of several women into employment with more qualified positions than the past (namely the 1950’s and 1960’s).

This is set within a culture of equal opportunities, which receive considerable attention at a European level and which have been set as one of the main goals towards a fairer society. This may have consequences for the way that both parents jointly determine their parenting, their participation in the labour market and the negotiations between genders. Such framework – equal opportunities on the one hand and female emancipation on the other, in a competitive and little-regulated market – seems to lead to a potential contraposition, or trade-off, between equal opportunity and family (or family-friendly) policies.

As it appears from recent literature, the common goal of reconciliation measures is therefore not only to support work-family balance, which is instrumental to achieving the Lisbon objectives, but also to solve some problems that are increasingly concerning various countries, such as lower birth rates or the postponement of childbearing and the ensuing ageing of the population.

\(^1\) In March 2000, EU Heads of Government met in Lisbon and agreed on a document with very ambitious goals. It aimed to make Europe "the most competitive continent of the planet", by increasing productivity and boosting employment by twenty million jobs within ten years. One of the main new features of the Lisbon document concerned employment targets. Until then, the governments had aimed at reducing unemployment rates, and thus decrease the number of unemployed people, not of inactive people who are on the margins of the labour market. Since the Lisbon Council, EU governments set the target of raising the working-age population in employment in the EU to US levels (70%), the female employment rate to 60% and the older workers employment rate (concerning people aged between 55 and 64) to 50%: all this within a period of ten years.
The work-family balance measures dealing with the different national frameworks are the result of the different social (or family) policies designed on the basis of the aspects related to work, gender roles, family forms and different welfare strategies mentioned above. As a general rule, social policies are intended to comply with the guiding principles sketched out in the European masterplan, and in particular with the March 2000 Lisbon agreements.

In particular this book focuses on the relation between family and gender mainstreaming to stress if and how the debate on the topic of reconciliation policies, the family policies and the gender issues are implemented and how in the contemporary sociological framework.

All the contributions are concerned with the relationship between family, gender and work: in particular, they illustrate the different ways in which this relationship is addressed in various European social policy systems. It shows, that the promotion of qualification measures and childcare facilities increases the activity rate of women, although there remain doubts about the quality and sustainability of many measures and the impact on families.

All this has been and still is very important; however, it appeared that, especially in single European Member States, the family is at a standstill. This situation calls for a review of the political agenda, since the family holds its own specific importance for at least three reasons: firstly, the family is the privileged site for individuals to develop a sense of balance and wellbeing; secondly, the family often mediates the rules and values of a given society; finally, the family has always served as a “safety net” during the times of weakness and need that individuals go through in the different phases of their life (when it provides childcare or looks after elderly or disabled relatives).

The family is finding it difficult to face the challenges posed by the economic sphere, which is increasingly intrusive (it suffices to
think of fragmented work schedules, which sometimes are in conflict with family needs) and demanding (like in the perception that the family should be subsidiary to work). This state of affairs requires a thorough analysis of the relationship between family, work and gender differences.

This work presents multiple viewpoints; each author addresses this issue in their own terms; thanks to their original approach, at the end of the book, it is possible appreciate a variety of aspects, which intertwine in different ways but which all contribute to simplify the complex and multidimensional framework of the relationship between gender, family and work in the European arena. Finally, and most importantly, it helps identify the challenging elements to be found in the current organisation of the European welfare system.

Sincere thanks are expressed to all authors for the valuable work done. Editing this book gave me (as I hope to readers) new opportunities for considerations about gender differences issues, the importance of family in Europe and the concrete impact of social and family policies on individuals' life, positive or negative as they could be.

This book contains contributions from: Almudena Moreno and Enrique Crespo (Spain), Anne Revillard (France), Anne Marie Fontaine, Cláudia Andrade, Marisa Matias, Jorge Gato and Marina Mendonça (Portugal), Strandh Matias e Karina Nillson (Sweden).

Isabella Crespi
CHAPTER 1

GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND RECONCILIATION
POLICIES IN EUROPE: PERSPECTIVES AND DILEMMAS

Isabella Crespi

1. STARTING FROM BEIJING 1995: TEN YEARS (AND SOMETHING) OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Social policies, aiming to promote gender equality, have evolved substantially in the last decades. Ever since 1975, when the United Nations established Women’s International Year and most of the western nations started to acknowledge gender inequality – then known as women’s discrimination – as a public issue that deserved public intervention, the strategies and political instruments of those policies have been changing. Focus on sex discrimination (discrimination based on biological differences) and especially women’s discrimination has evolved to focus on gender (based on the cultural and social consequences of those biological differences).

In September 1995, some 5000 representatives from 192 countries, together with some 30,000 women and men representing 3000 non governmental organizations, gathered in Beijing for the Fourth World Conference on Women, and adopted a far-reaching ‘Platform for Action’. One of the most important and innovative elements of this Platform was a provision calling on the UN and its signatory states to “mainstream” gender issues across the policy process: “... governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes, so that, before decisions are taken, an
analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively” (Beijing Platform for Action 1995, para 79).

Gender mainstreaming\(^1\) was established as a major global strategy for the promotion of gender equality\(^2\) in the Beijing Platform for Action from the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Gender mainstreaming was not a new strategy, in 1995. It was reaffirmed in the *Beijing Platform for Action* and built on years of previous experience in trying to bring gender perspectives to the centre of attention in policies and programmes. Although the notion of mainstreaming gender issues across the policy process had antecedents in the previous two decades, the official recognition and endorsement of mainstreaming as a formal goal of all UN member states has provided a global mandate for change, and “a template against which to judge both national and international policies” (Hafner-Burton and Pollack 2002, 339-340).

In addition to specific actions for women – positive actions – gender mainstreaming emerged as a necessary strategy for fighting gender inequality in the long term through many documents and many directives.

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1. Gender Mainstreaming is a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. Mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a strategy, an approach, a means to achieve the goal of gender equality. Mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities - policy development, research, advocacy/dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects (Osagi UN), http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/gendermainstreaming.htm.

2. Equality between women and men (gender equality): refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women’s and men’s rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women’s issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development (Osagi UN), http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/gendermainstreaming.htm.
The focus on gender mainstreaming, was strongly reiterated throughout the Beijing Platform for Action which emphasized the importance of considering the impacts on women and men, and on equality objectives, of actions taken in every sector. The responsibility of all government agencies for supporting equality objectives through their policies and programmes was highlighted. The Beijing Platform for Action also identified the important roles of international organizations, NGOs and civil society, the private sector and other actors (United Nations 2002).

After this important starting points, some other followed.

The ECOSOC agreed conclusions (1997/2) established some important overall principles for gender mainstreaming and defines it as: “… the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It was a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. A letter from the Secretary-General to heads of all United Nations entities (13 October 1997) provided further concrete directives.

The General Assembly twenty-third special session to follow up implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (June 2000), enhanced the mainstreaming mandate within the United Nations. The UN assessment prepared for the Beijing+5 Special Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2000 concluded that, although some progress had been made in achieving gender equality, there were still significant gaps to full gender equality.3

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3 Women and girls still represent 2/3 of the world illiterates; fewer girls than boys finish primary school; women represent less than 15% of national elected officials;
More recently, the Economic and Social Council adopted a resolution (ECOSOC resolution 2001/41) on gender mainstreaming (July 2001) which calls on the Economic and Social Council to ensure that gender perspectives are taken into account in all its work, including in that work of its functional commissions, and recommends a five-year review of the implementation of the ECOSOC agreed conclusions 1997/2 (United Nations 2002).

In 2005, the representatives of Governments gathering at the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, declared some important guidelines:

• “reaffirm the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (held in 1995) adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000);
• welcome the progress made thus far towards achieving gender equality, stress that challenges and obstacles remain in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and, in this regard, pledge to undertake further action to ensure their full and accelerated implementation;
• emphasize that the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is essential to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration and stress the need to ensure the integration of a gender perspective in the high-level rural women are responsible for half of the world’s food production and yet, globally, women own less than 1% of land. In some cases the so-called ‘gender gaps’ are at the detriment of boys. This is particularly the case in some regions where the educational performance and participation of boy (Ruprecht 2003).
plenary meeting on the review of the Millennium Declaration;
• recognize that the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the fulfilment of the obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women are mutually reinforcing in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women;
• call upon the United Nations system, international and regional organizations, all sectors of civil society, including non-governmental organizations, as well as all women and men, to fully commit themselves and to intensify their contributions to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly”

With regard to this, Walby (2005) explored to what extent the Beijing +10 process has led to the improvement of the lives of women and which are the key issues involved in making such an assessment, in particular, the conceptualisation and measurement of gender equality. It starts with a consideration of three different perspectives concerning the conceptualisation of “improvement” as either economic development, human capabilities or gender equality. The analysis of the tensions between this three different models of gender equality resulted in a critical review of the operationalisation of these concepts and the collection of data necessary to assess progress on each of the 12 critical areas of concern of the UN Platform for Action with a focus on their application in the European region.

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From this study and others (Booth and Bennett 2002; Bustelo 2003; Pollack and Hafner-Burton 2000) is it clear that gender issue is becoming more and more relevant in European policies even if different could be the single country interpretation.

1.1. Gender equality as the goal, gender mainstreaming as the strategy

As a matter of fact, gender equality is a goal that has been accepted, at least in theory, by governments and international organizations: it is enshrined in international agreements and commitments. Anyway there are many ongoing discussions about what equality means (and does not mean) in practice and how to achieve it because even if it is clear that there are global patterns to inequality between women and men, not so clear and common are the concrete actions to struggle them.

Gender mainstreaming entails bringing the perceptions, experience, knowledge and interests of women as well as men to bear on policy-making, planning and decision-making and aims to situate gender equality issues at the centre of analyses and policy decisions. In this sense “mainstreaming” is a process and a strategy rather than a goal and consists in bringing what can be seen as marginal (gender issue) into the core business and main decision-making process of an organization. While mainstreaming is clearly essential for securing human rights and social justice for women as well as men, it also increasingly recognized that incorporating

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5 For example, women tend to suffer violence at the hands of their intimate partners more often than men; women’s political participation and their representation in decision-making structures lag behind men’s; women and men have different economic opportunities; women are over-represented among the poor; and women and girls make up the majority of people trafficked and involved in the sex trade (United Nations 2002).
gender perspectives in different areas of development ensures the effective achievement of other social and economic goals (Stratigaki 2000). Mainstreaming can reveal a need for changes in goals, strategies and actions to ensure that both women and men can influence, participate in and benefit from development processes. This may lead to changes in organizations – structures, procedures and cultures – to create organizational environments, which are conducive to the promotion of gender equality.

These specific issues – and others – need to be addressed in efforts to promote gender equality as a goal. Achieving greater equality between women and men requires changes at many levels, including changes in attitudes and relationships, changes in institutions and legal frameworks, changes in economic institutions, and changes in political decision-making structures through this kind of gender mainstreaming that includes as much as possible the empowerment of the individuals involved.

An important point, which should be raised in all discussions of gender policy issue, is that gender mainstreaming does not in any way preclude the need for specific targeted interventions to address women’s empowerment and gender equality. The Beijing Platform for Action calls in fact for a dual approach: gender mainstreaming complemented with inputs designed to address specific gaps or problems faced in the promotion of gender equality. This strategy seeks to ensure that, across the entire policy spectrum, the analysis of issues and the formulation of policy options is informed by a consideration of gender differences and inequalities; but also that opportunities are sought to narrow gender gaps and support greater equality between women and men. In this manner a complementary plan is “targeted interventions” that have as their primary goal the narrowing of gender gaps that disadvantage women. These types of targeted initiatives do not in any way contradict the mainstreaming
strategy because this could be implemented in somewhat different ways in relation to activities such as research, policy development, policy analysis, programme delivery, or technical assistance activities. It is important to underline different possibilities of gender mainstreaming actions because this enhanced various patterns which could better apply to possible situation.

There is no “set formula or blueprint” that can be applied in every context. However, what is common to mainstreaming in all sectors or development issues is that a concern for gender equality is brought into the mainstream of activities rather than dealt with as an add-on. Steps in the mainstreaming strategy are the assessment of how and why gender differences and inequalities are relevant to the subject under discussion, identifying where there are opportunities to narrow these inequalities and deciding on the approach to be taken (United Nations 2002). A profound transformation of the structures and systems, which lie at the root of subordination and gender inequality, is required; “to do this, we must uncover the hidden biases that limit women’s and men’s ability to enjoy equal rights and opportunities and find the most effective and culturally appropriate means to support women’s and men’s capacities to drive social change” (Ruprecht 2003, 6). In this sentence is included the necessity for different ways of thinking about gender equality.
2. Gender mainstreaming in the European context: perspectives and debates

2.1. Evolution and a critique of the idea of gender mainstreaming

The European community was one of the first major institutions to seek to ensure equal treatment for men and women on the grounds that, by treating individuals equally, discrimination will be removed. From its early days, the principle of gender equality was considered as a key factor of its policies (De Clementi 2003; Ellina 2003). This general notion includes the different identities of European citizens, the acknowledgement and the protection of minority groups, the valuing of differences and the creation of a social, cultural and legal framework supporting gender balance.

During the making of the European Union, issues of gender equity played – as they do today – a key role in fostering participation to the labour market in conditions of equality, and they have also started having an important and continued influence in the policy-making process of the new Member States. Article 119 in the Treaty of Rome (1957) referred to the right of women to equal pay with men and this inclusion in the Treaty related to the prevention of market distortion rather than being an explicit social-policy commitment. Yet, this and other articles, which made it possible for the Commission to prepare directives on equal treatment proved highly significant as the source of five gender-equality directives between 1975 and 1986 (O’Connor 2005). However, is to be noticed that Article 119

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6 Directive on Equal Pay (75/117); Directive on Equal Treatment (76/207); Directive on Equal Treatment in Matters of Social Security (79/7); Directive on Equal Treatment in Occupational Security Schemes (86/378); Directive on Equal Treatment Between Men and Women Engaged in an Activity Including Agriculture, in a Self-employed Capacity, and on the Protection of Self-employed Women During Pregnancy and
(the legal basis), five Directives, four Recommendations and four Action Programmes, which have followed are still largely focused on equal pay and related labour market matters. Like European Community social policy, “the policies on the equality of women have been substantially confined to measures essential to the making of the common market and the restructuring of labour markets” (Rossilli 2000, 5). It is clear since the beginning of this process that the core is the work and employment issue for gender equality that is prominent respect to family and education, in a workfare perspective.

Few years after the foreign and finance ministers of the European Community Member States signed the Treaty on European Union (1992)\(^7\), which introduced the principle of the opportunity to promote women’s employment, the Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing (1995). The European Union participated actively, defining its intervention plan with regards to the Conference Plan for Action and becoming the first party to enforce the claims and the strategic objectives that were raised during the Conference. So, the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action was rather speedy: one week after the closing of the Conference, the European Parliament approved a specific resolution, which basically asserted that the rights of women and little girls could not be separated from universal human rights. It reaffirmed the need to eradicate poverty by reinforcing women’s potential, to actively coordinate the female perspective in equality policies, to introduce gender issues in all policies, programmes and legislative frameworks, and to adopt measures in order to achieve women’s actual participation in decision-making bodies. The importance of the principles asserted in Beijing was such that the European Council decided to monitor

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\(^7\) This treaty was signed on 7 February 1992; it was then ratified and it came into force on 1\(^{st}\) November 1993.
the implementation of the Platform in the Member States on a yearly basis. This is done by means of annual reviews of gender relations in Europe.

Gender mainstreaming was then launched in 1996 to promote gender equality in all European policies, in the context of international and European mobilization on women’s issues. It was aimed to transform mainstream policies by introducing a gender equality perspective. There was also some pressure on the Spring 1996 Intergovernmental Conference to revise the 1992 Treaty to broaden the scope of equal opportunities so as to include political, economic, social and cultural rights, but not to much effect (Rees 1998; Grecchi 2001).

At the end, the Amsterdam Treaty (1997) explicitly identified the removal of inequalities between men and women and the promotion of gender equality in all European Community activities as one of its main objectives, thereby validating concepts of equal opportunities mainstreaming in a legal and institutional framework. This process involved considering systematically all differences in the condition, the status and the needs of women and men in all the fields of intervention of the European Community. Gender and equality issues must therefore be introduced in all activities, namely in planning, implementation, monitoring and appraisal. This strategy has proved to be a valid tool to promote equality and gender mainstreaming which, when combined with specific actions – namely legislative and financial programmes – forms the dual-track approach set out in the Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality.

European legislation was already advanced equal treatment, in particular through its new Directive on equal treatment of men and women in the provision of goods and services and equality between women and men was reinforced by the new Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (2004). In addition to the provisions of the current Treaty on gender equality (1992), the Constitution expressly
stated that equality was a value of the Union, which should have been promoted not only inside the Union but also in its relations with the rest of the world.

The most innovative part of the European Constitution – which was signed in Rome in 2004 – Part 1, conferred on the European new areas of political and legislative competences within the framework of its enlargement to new member countries. Besides the strengthening of the powers of the European Parliament and the creation of an European Foreign Minister, it is worth mentioning the greater importance attached to social policies and increasingly effective actions against discriminations and in favour of equal opportunities. The central concepts of the Constitution are the notions of “social market economy”, “full employment”, “social justice”, “inter-generational solidarity”, the “fight against social exclusion and discrimination” and the “principle of gender equality”. This was a great result for gender policies and establish that gender issue is one of the fundamental aspects towards which a social model could be oriented in the future.

The 2005 annual report on equality between women and men, as requested by heads of state and government at the Spring European Council, in March 2005, is the first to cover the enlarged European of 25 Member States. It states the challenges and the policy orientations of European:

Moreover, Member States, in cooperation with the Commission, have developed indicators for the follow-up of the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action. In 2005, the 10th anniversary of the Platform, Member States committed themselves to continue to develop indicators in the missing areas.
1. Gender mainstreaming and reconciliation policies

| **Strengthening the position of women in the labour market** | Strengthening the position of women in the labour market, guaranteeing a sustainable social protection system, and creating an inclusive society remains fundamental in order to reach the Lisbon goal |
| **Increasing care facilities for children and other dependants** | The emergence of the ageing society calls for an adaptation of social policies that is financially and socially sustainable. The provision of adequate care facilities remains the fundamental instrument for allowing women to enter and remain in the labour market throughout their lives. |
| **Addressing men in achieving gender equality** | The promotion of equality between women and men implies changes for men as well as for women. Therefore it is essential that both men and women actively participate in creating new strategies for achieving gender equality. |
| **Integrating the gender perspective into immigration and integration policies** | Effective and responsible integration of immigrants in the labour market and in society is one of the key factors for success in reaching the Lisbon targets. The gender perspective is to a large extent lacking in integration policies, which hampers the possibilities to fully utilise the potential of immigrant women in the labour market. |
| **Monitoring developments towards gender equality** | The 10th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2005 provides an opportunity for the European to reaffirm the commitments made in the Declaration and the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995 and to report on achievements in relation to gender equality since 1995. The assessment is based on a set of core indicators developed partly in the framework of the annual reviews of the Beijing Platform for Action in the Council and partly by the Commission. This set of core indicators is also the basis for annual monitoring of development presented in the annex to this report. The Commission’s forthcoming proposal on the creation of a European Institute for Gender Equality will enhance possibilities to monitor achievements. |

Source: European Communities commission (2005b, 6-9)

Further on 8 March 2005, the Commission (European Communities Commission 2005a) proposed the creation of a European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) between women and men. The idea of creating such a body was first included in the
Commission’s social policy agenda proposals, adopted at Nice in December 2000 (European Council 2000). Subsequently, the June 2004 European Council invited the Commission to bring forward a proposal to set up a gender institute\(^9\) (European Council 2004).

The progress made in the European towards equality between women and men over the last ten years is apparent\(^10\), some kind of convergence can be found in new Member States too. Economic growth and the general development of society have made this progress possible. Despite this extension, which has been driven by the jurisprudence of the European Court of Justice and the political action of the European Commission and the European Parliament, European Community policies have only achieved “a certain degree of formal equality of women employed in full-time standard work and have opened new but unequal employment opportunities for women” (Rossilli 2000, 6). That is, changes did not occur automatically though they were the outcome of strategic political measures aimed at promoting gender equality at European as well as national level.

Furthermore, the achievements made in promoting gender equality and in decreasing the gender gap in strategic areas such

\(^9\) The Institute will work with a wide range of Community programmes and bodies and will be an independent centre of excellence at European level. It will stimulate research and exchanges of experience by organising meetings between policy makers, experts and stakeholders and it will raise awareness of gender equality policies with events including conferences, campaigns and seminars. Another vital task will be to develop tools for supporting the integration of gender equality into all Community policies. The Institute will start operating 12 months after the regulation establishing it has been adopted by Parliament and Council and should be up and running in 2007. It will be funded by the Commission with a proposed budget of € 52.5 million for the period 2007-13 (Barbier et al., 2005).

\(^10\) Over the last decades, Community laws on gender equality have built a coherent and consolidated legal framework that old as well as new Member States are required to comply with. These laws, which have also been consolidated through the rulings of the European Court of Justice, have become a strong and important pillar in the field of the individual rights of European citizens, creating a basis of equal rights guaranteed to all persons, irrespective of their gender. From a socio-economic viewpoint, these laws have played and still play a key role; this is so true that they are now a prerequisite to reach the objectives concerning sustainable development and economic growth.
as employment, social inclusion, education, research and external relations differ over time and among Member States, though gender gaps persist in almost all these strategic areas.

2.2. Gender mainstreaming, positive action and equal treatment: different talks about equal opportunities in Europe

As we seen before, gender mainstreaming is nowadays recognized as an official policy in many developed countries (particularly in Western Europe) and among international organizations such as the UNDP, the World Bank, the European Union and World Health Organization, but it is neither the only, nor the traditional approach to gender equality policy.

Over the past years, the European Union has developed an actual strategy to promote equal opportunities between men and women. In fifty years (1957-2007) European legislation has broadened the notion of equality between men and women workers. Beginning with equal pay (article 119 of the 1957 Treaty of Rome), European Community legislation has gone on to address equal treatment and equal opportunity, including parental leave and the measures to combat sexual harassment in the workplace. As illustrated above, at first, European Community equal opportunities strategies were mainly focused on the implementation of specific measures particularly addressed to women, which led to the introduction of numerous positive action programmes; at a later stage, this approach gave way to the adoption of the so-called gender mainstreaming strategy, which involved the incorporation of issues of equal opportunities between men and women in all political fields, as it was internationally recognised in the 1995 UN Conference on Women held in Beijing.

Meyer and Prügl (1999) reported the development of a gender mainstreaming strategy in the European by illustrating how this
strategy was shaped initially by other than gender equality policy goals. By exploring the historical periodisation of equal opportunities delivery strategies and challenging the compartmentalization of these developments they suggested that equality policies can better be conceptualized in terms of a three-legged equality stool (Booth and Bennett 2002), which recognizes the interconnectiveness of three perspectives – the equal treatment perspective, the women's perspective and the gender perspective. More than this it has become commonplace to divide European equal opportunities policies into three different phases or three ideal-typical approaches to gender issues: equal treatment, positive action, and gender mainstreaming (Walby 1997; Rees 1998; Miller and Razavi 1998; Aa.Vv. 1999).

The earliest and most common approach, equal treatment (ET), “implies that no individual should have fewer human rights or opportunities than any other” (Rees 1998, 29), and the application of such a policy involves the creation and enforcement of formally equal rights for men and women, such as the right to equal pay for equal work. Equal Treatment derives from Article 119 of the 1957 Treaty of Rome, which asserted the need to move towards equal pay for men and women in respect of equal work. This stance corresponds broadly to liberal theories of equality and citizenship. The focus is on the individual, who, given equal treatment in respect of employment, is free to succeed or fail, as the case may be. Such an equal treatment approach is an essential element in any equal opportunities policy, but the approach is nevertheless flawed in concentrating exclusively on the formal rights of women as workers, and therefore fails to address the fundamental causes of sexual inequality in the informal “gender contracts” (Rees 1998, 32) among women and men and equality of access does not lead in practice to equality of outcome. Infact the equal treatment model is “rooted in a narrow distributive concept of justice, and focuses the debate upon the allocation of
1. Gender mainstreaming and reconciliation policies

positions within a hierarchy which is given” (Rees 1998, 29).

It was argued that equal treatment policies were blind to the unequal position of men and women in relation to labour market access, not only in respect of past discriminations (for example, the inferior and gendered education customarily offered to girls in the past), but also because this approach neglected the consequences of the caring and domestic responsibilities that have customarily been assumed to be women’s work.

In contrast to this one, a second one is called positive action (PA), in which “the emphasis shifts from equality of access to create conditions more likely to result in equality of outcome” (Rees 1998, 34). The term is not new: it is the title of one of the first laws of this century, whereby American legislators introduced specific programmes in order to eliminate direct discrimination against men, women, persons of colour and other vulnerable groups in society. This approach rests on the notion that membership of groups makes a difference to outcome. More concretely, positive action involves the adoption of specific actions on behalf of women, in order to overcome their unequal starting positions in a male-dominated or patriarchal society. Thus in the 1980s and 1990s, in a number of countries within the European were developed policies of positive action, as a consequence of a series of judgements that justified positive action to help women catch up with men – particularly in respect of the labour market. These actions included, for example, training courses designed to attract women, child-care projects, assertiveness training, and projects such as New Opportunities for Women (NOW). Such policies recognize difference between men and women, and women are seen as requiring special treatment to enable them to compete with men. However, positive action is itself contentious; neo-liberals argue that it creates new inequalities since men and women are not given equal treatment (Rossilli
2000; Ellina 2003; Aa.Vv. 2004), and also comes into conflict with civic universalism. Finally, others have argued that helping women transforms them (women) into a client group in need of assistance, and that such policies might actually reinforce gender inequalities by perpetuating conventional assumptions relating to the gendered division of labour, particularly in the domestic sphere.

In the European experience, “positive actions are conceived as wide-ranging programmes aimed at identifying and eliminating discriminatory behaviour as well as the effects of any form of direct or indirect discrimination” (Grecchi 2001, 62). The Commission’s Action Programmes on equal opportunities have recommended that Member States develop fairly comprehensive positive measures (training, flexible schedules and work life cycle, sharing of family responsibilities, childcare, and so forth) covering a wide range of aspects that negatively affect women in the labour market.

At the extreme, positive action may also take the form of positive discrimination, which seeks to increase the participation of women (or other under-represented groups) through the use of affirmative-action preferences or quotas. Positive discrimination finds many supporters among women’s rights activists, but throughout most of the world it remains a controversial and divisive approach, raising questions about fairness and the individual rights of men who are thus discriminated against. It is clear, however, that gender equality cannot come about only through women-targeted and men-targeted projects that seek to improve individual conditions alone. Lovecy (2002) investigates the distinctive contribution made to the framing of women’s rights over the last two decades Council of Europe, which recent studies of the ‘Europeanisation’ of public policies have largely neglected. Elements of congruence are identified between the major mobilising themes of second wave feminism and the emphasis on protecting individual rights, and its sensitivity to the
incompleteness and shortcomings of ‘actually existing’ democratic institutions and practices. The relative openness of its agenda-setting processes is also underlined. Flagship policies for women have been centred since the mid-1980s on a “politics of presence” frame and the (contested) concept of “parity democracy”, and the tensions between these and the more recent turn to gender mainstreaming are explored. It is important to understand Council’s role in diffusing into the E.U. governance arena women’s claims to equal participation and presence in the policy process.

The third and most promising approach identified by Rees is *gender mainstreaming*. Attention to what has come to be known as ‘gender mainstreaming’ is not completely new; it has emerged and evolved from earlier debates on the role of women in the development process. Moser has shown that the way in which national governments have conceptualized and addressed women’s position evolved gradually from a welfare approach in the post-war period until the 1970s, to one that emphasized efficiency, equity, and empowerment in more recent times (Moser 1993). The current phase of European policy, gender mainstreaming, has gained considerably in influence since the UN International Women’s Conference in Beijing (1995). The emphasis has shifted from women, as individuals and/or as “a problematic or disadvantaged grouping, in order to focus critically on the institutions that generate gendered inequalities” (Crompton and Le Feuvre 2000, 335-336).

Gender mainstreaming means that, in addition to specific policies addressing gender discrimination – which are still necessary to deal with actual gender discrimination – there is “a need to look for a gender perspective in all public policies. And here, one should take into account the strategy of gender mainstreaming. If the main strategy of gender equality policies is gender mainstreaming, one would probably have to seek gender perspective as the searched
effect in other public policies (that is, whether public policies – not the gender-equality policy – are formulated, executed and evaluated with gender perspective), in addition to evaluating the gender policy itself” (Bustelo 2003, 384; 399).

The concept of gender mainstreaming has been defined by European institutions as the “the systematic consideration of differences between the needs of women and men in all Community policies, at the point of planning for the purpose of achieving equality” (European Commission 2005c, 21) and has been incorporated in European policies. It calls for the systematic incorporation of gender issues throughout all governmental institutions and policies. As defined by an Expert Group commissioned by the Council of Europe, “gender mainstreaming is the (re)organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making” (1998). Mainstream organizations are gendered in terms of their culture, rules, and outcomes and therefore, “the decisions, policies, and resources from the mainstream are likely to neglect excluded or disadvantaged groups, including women, thereby reproducing gender inequalities and existing hierarchies” (March et al. 1999, 9). Therefore, gender issues should be incorporated in the ‘mainstream’, and the term ‘gender mainstreaming’ was born, referring to the integration of gender concerns at all levels of decision making, policy formulation, and implementation throughout all governmental institutions and policies.

The model of equal opportunities, which underlies mainstreaming policies, is based upon the notion of the politics of difference. While the significance of the concept of difference between groups rather than sameness among individuals is now widely accepted, its implications for policies seeking to ensure equal opportunity
are less well understood. Gender mainstreaming however, has been largely used as an alibi for neutralizing positive action. The successful implementation of positive action in political decision-making had challenged the gender distribution of political power over policy institutions and technical, human and financial resources. This led to policy softening and institutional weakening due to counteracting by the European political and administrative hierarchies (Stratigaki 2005).

The politics of difference perspective recognises the androcentricity of organisations and seeks to change it, thus facilitating women’s full participation on equal terms. It is a longer-term strategy towards equal opportunities than either equal treatment, positive actions or positive discrimination and recognises, and indeed celebrates, diversity.

Mainstreaming policies are those which respect and respond to differences, rather than seeking to assist women to fit into male institutions and cultures by becoming more like men (Cockburn 1991).

These three conceptualisations of Equal Opportunity (equal treatment, positive actions and positive discrimination, and mainstreaming equality) can be linked to three approaches: “tinkering, tailoring and transforming” (Rees 1998, 42 and ff.):

- “tinkering is essentiality about tidying up the legislation and procedures for equal treatment. This includes providing a sound legal base with adequate resources to ensure law enforcement. While limited in its effectiveness, the law nevertheless has some capacity to change practice and policy;
- tailoring (Positive Actions and Positive Discrimination) involves the use of supplementary and support measures and sanctions to encourage more effective equality of access. It allows for ‘add-on’, supplementary measures to take account of women’s
‘special’ position: ‘nips and tucks’ to accommodate their different shape;
• transforming training provision builds upon the concept of politics of difference and seeks to feminise the mainstream or mainstream equality. It implies moving beyond add-on policies to support and encourage women’s participation. It involves a paradigm shift from the thousand flowers of good practice we know to be blooming from various compendia and from specialist women’s training projects to mainstreaming good practice. The transforming agenda is predicated upon the argument that opportunities to participate in education, training and employment should not be enhanced or restricted by membership of one group or another”.

The European Community, which initially promoted positive action, now recommends that all Member States incorporate equal opportunities considerations at all levels, in all policies and fields of action: in other words, that they implement gender mainstreaming, which is defined as “the integration of the gender perspective into every stage of policy processes – design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation – with a view to promoting equality between women and men. It means assessing how policies impact on the life and position of both women and men – and taking responsibility to re-address them if necessary. This is the way to make gender equality a concrete reality in the lives of women and men creating space for everyone within the organisations as well as in communities – to contribute to the process of articulating a shared vision of sustainable human development and translating it into reality”11.

Jahan makes an important distinction between ‘integrationist’ and transformative or ‘agenda setting’ approaches to gender

mainstreaming: “the ‘integrationist’ approach introduces a gender perspective into existing policy processes without challenging policy models. This is in contrast with the ‘agenda-setting’ approach, which involves “a fundamental rethinking, not simply of the means or procedures of policy-making, but of the ends or goals of policy from a gender perspective” (Jahan 1995, 452).

The latest European guideline on equal opportunities policies concerns mainstreaming, in the way of supporting women’s involvement in decision-making: this strategy consists in the horizontal implementation of equal opportunities in the widest possible range of sectors, while ensuring that issues concerning equal opportunities are considered at all phases of the policy-making process in each of these sectors12 and is strictly related with the idea of gender mainstreaming as a transformative agenda. This approach promises a revolutionary change in the international and domestic policy process, in which gender issues become a core consideration not simply for specific departments or ministries dealing with women, but rather for all actors across a range of issue-areas and at all stages in the policy process from conception and legislation to implementation and evaluation. Equally clear, however, are “the extraordinary changes required in the mentalities and organizations of both domestic and international actors in order for the principle of gender mainstreaming to be implemented fully” (Hafner-Burton and Pollack 2002, 339-340). Thus defined, gender mainstreaming is a

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12 For example in both the US and the European there has been pressure to introduce legislation to provide equal treatment for women at work, the implementation of which often depends on worker and other organizations (Acker 1989; Evans and Nelson 1989; Rees 1998). The European Union has passed a plethora of legally binding Directives as well as advisory Recommendations which require the equal treatment of women and men in employment and in employment-related activities. These Directives were passed not merely as a result of the interest of the European Commission, but as a result of political pressure from women activists (Rees, 1998; (Walby 2001).
potentially revolutionary concept, which promises to bring a gender dimension\textsuperscript{13} into all international governance.

Yet, gender mainstreaming is also an extraordinarily demanding concept, which requires the adoption of a gender perspective by all the central actors in the policy process – some of whom may have little experience or interest in gender issues. This raises two central questions – why, and how, did the international community adopt a policy of gender mainstreaming at Beijing and since, and how has it been implemented in practice? (Hafner-Burton and Pollack 2002, 341-342).

On the whole, European equal opportunity policies have been part and parcel of European Community modernizing action; “on the one hand, they have contributed to creating new employment opportunities for women, especially in Southern countries, which were low in female labour-force participation, on the other hand, they have contributed to increasing sex/gender inequalities in terms of occupational segregation, wage differential, and social benefits” (Rossilli 2000, 10).

The notion of mainstreaming in fact overcomes the traditional view of equal opportunities as the allocation of duties and responsibilities following an artificially balanced distribution, also known as “quota system”. On the contrary, it can be a way to combine social responsibility and the promotion of women’s participation to all European policies and political decision-making

\textsuperscript{13} Gender: refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/ time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a women or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context. Other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis include class, race, poverty level, ethnic group and age, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/gendermainstreaming.htm.
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positions with a bottom up approach.

The underlying idea is to do away with the notion of policies “to help women” but to start thinking about policies involving women; the definition of mainstreaming asserts that it is about “not restricting efforts to promote equality to the implementation of specific measures to help women, but mobilising all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality” (European Communities Commission 1996). This could be “an example of empowerment, of responsible behaviour towards objectives with gendered outcomes, where women are no longer considered as a mere subject of legislation; in fact, it could trigger a kind of renewed politicisation of women, which would follow different practices in a context that, over the last thirty years, has undergone some profound changes” (Vincenti 2005, 124-125).

Some argued that specialized projects for women often failed to make women’s lives better, and that the “very act of separating women’s programming from the central, mainstream programming which involved men, resulted in increased marginalization of women and their roles” (Anderson 1990, 32). It took the view that women were not passive beneficiaries in the domestic realm, but contributed actively, through their labour, to the formal and informal economy and for this reason valuable citizens.

3. Towards a “gendered” European welfare state?

Jacques Delors was one of the first to popularize the term European Social Model (ESM) in the mid-1980s by designating it as an alternative to the American form of pure-market capitalism. The basic idea of the ESM is that “economic and social progress must go hand in hand; economic growth, in other words, is to be combined with social cohesion” (Jepsen and Serrano 2005, 234).
The ESM is not a reality in the sense in which we think of national welfare states, it is “an overarching aspirational model incorporating the broad parameters to which European welfare states conform” (O’Connor 2005, 346). It is generally used to describe the European experience of simultaneously promoting sustainable economic growth and social cohesion. The ESM change its shape and aim from a ‘a social space’ to policy coordination and is constantly a work in progress; it reflects a tension between aspirations and statements of values expressed at the European level and subsidiarity. Key statements on it are included in European treaties and in documents of the European Council but its most consistent articulation emanates from the European Commission (European Commission various years) and are often referred to as enshrining common views and principles on different social issues and their importance within the European Community construction (Servais 2001; Vaughan and Whitehead 2003; Jepsen and Serrano 2005). It is described as a specific common European aim geared to the achievement of full employment, adequate social protection, and equality, but the different dimensions of the concept can be seen as rhetorical resources intended to legitimize the politically constructed and identity-building project of the European institutions.

This model is today facing some challenges that deal with the demographic changes with an ageing population and a shrinking working population that continue to be a major challenge in the European after enlargement.

Over the past two decades, a decline in birth rates in advanced industrialized societies to levels well below those required for population replacement has been accompanied by a major change

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in the crossnational incidence of fertility. This has, in turn, given rise to a massive transformation in traditional cross-national patterns of relationships between fertility and other variables. Whereas previously the countries with the highest period fertility rates were those in which family-oriented cultural traditions were most pronounced and in which women’s labour market participation was least, these relationships are now wholly reversed (Castles 2003).

One can readily see why such a shift in preferences is likely to produce an overall decline in fertility of the kind observed in Western nations since 1960. Whether premised on women’s increased education and employment (Esping-Andersen 1996, 1999, 2002; Lesthaeghe and Willems 1999), a decline in the salience of breadwinner models of family interdependence and increasing demands for gender equity (McDonald 2000; or, in a somewhat different context, Sen 2001) the triumph of feminist ideas (Castles 1998), such a shift necessarily implies a much increased valuation of women’s work and a consequently greater willingness on the part of women to make temporary or permanent adjustments to fertility aspirations in order to pursue valued career goals. Paradoxically, as Castels suggests, this same preference shift also provides important reasons why countries characterized by modern employment structures and modern cultural values are also likely to be characterized by higher fertility levels than countries which do not.

Many of the challenges, which lie ahead of contemporary welfare states and – as many politicians and scholars argue – will shake their very foundations, have indeed been prevalent for quite a while. Thus, assessing past reactions of welfare states to pressures of globalization, an ageing society or decreasing fertility rates allows projection of how states might handle these threats in the future.

Apropos of threats Castles (2004) is generally critical of accounts of ‘crisis of the welfare states’; while demographic changes had an
effect on the cross-national distribution of pension spending, it has been of minor significance compared to changes in programme coverage and generosity. Castles argues that the “rhetoric about the budgetary consequences of population aging is motivated more by short-term considerations of containing or cutting back public budgets than by justified anxieties concerning the consequences of demographic change” (2004, 139).

The debate on the impact of integration in the world economy and the development of the welfare state is one of the longest-running stories in the comparative public policy literature and started from Esping-Andersen (1990) *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. He addresses the question of whether the welfare state is merely the sum total of a nation’s social policy repertoire, or whether it is an institutional force above and beyond a given policy array. His answer is straightforward: the welfare state cannot be regarded as the sum total of social policies, it is more than a numerical cumulation of discrete programmes (Esping-Andersen 1994, 712). According to Esping-Andersen (1990), three interacting factors are significant: the nature of class mobilization (especially of the working class), class-political action structures, and the historical legacy of regime institutionalization. European societies are currently facing significant social, political and economic changes that are posing serious challenges to their welfare states. On the whole, European social policies are designed to follow the guidelines laid down in the European Masterplan and, in particular, in the March 2000 Lisbon Agreement.

The tenet of Esping-Andersen’s treatise of the welfare state was that, “for a long time in both the theoretical and empirical literature, too little attention had been given to cross-national differences in welfare state structures” (Arts and Gelissen 2002, 138).

Most recently of all, some more nuanced contributions have
suggested that the impact of the global economy is strongly mediated by domestic factors, including, most prominently, a country’s level of democratization and its balance of partisan forces (Glatzer and Rueschemeyer 2005).

Arts and Gelissen (2002) reconstruct several typologies of welfare states in order to establish, first, whether real welfare states are quite similar to others or whether they are rather unique specimens, and, second, whether there are three ideal-typical worlds of welfare capitalism or more. The authors conclude that real welfare states are hardly ever pure types and are usually hybrid cases; and that the issue of ideal-typical welfare states cannot be satisfactorily answered given the lack of formal theorizing and the still inconclusive outcomes of comparative research. In spite of this conclusion there is plenty of reason to continue to work on and with the original or modified typologies. It is clear that scandinavian states predominate; the ‘liberal’ cluster exemplified by the UK; and the ‘corporatist, conservative’ regime within which he places, for example, Germany, Italy and France. Esping-Andersen, however, does not really explore the importance of different family policies for women and men as mothers, fathers and citizens, nor does he elaborate on the importance of unpaid family-related work for welfare production, as observed, for example, in work by Lewis (1992) and Orloff (1993). What different welfare state regimes imply for the political and social definition of motherhood obviously needs further examination. Scandinavian family policies have had a mixed reception. Wolfe (1989) finds that the Scandinavian welfare states have created a new family form, ‘the public family’, in which both parents are in paid work, while the children are cared for in public day-care centres. For him, this family appears as a highly problematic construct. New family forms have also been interpreted as representing a democratisation of the relationship between genders and generations, even as an
indication of an emerging ‘woman-friendly’ welfare state (Hernes 1987). However that may be, both concepts, “the woman-friendly welfare state’ and ‘the public family’ presume a renegotiation of the boundaries between the public and the private, and a restructuring of both families and labour markets along gender lines” (Drew, Emerek and Mahon, 1998, 159-160).

At a European level, this type of reframing aims at the convergence of national welfare systems, a process which is embodied by the “Active Welfare State” model (AWS). This system is founded upon the concept/practice of “activation”, where the State is still construed as the central political institution in charge of creating and redistributing wealth. But, as Prandini highlights in his very interesting article:

- the problems of European societies cannot be ascribed solely to the challenges posed by globalisation. On the contrary, they largely depend on the way society is organised and on its inherent problems, like, for example, the ever-increasing demands in the fields of law and security. Therefore, European society should first be “analysed/deconstructed” from an intellectual viewpoint and then it should be “reconstructed” by means of some specific political practices;
- the economic system, with its trade-based structure, is the engine of growth. Economic growth, the activation of resources, and capitalisation are undisputed objectives and values because – although they are not sufficient – they are considered to be some of the prerequisites and the tools to reach any other objective;
- the economic growth of the system and the activation of all available resources call for a cohesive society. Each member has to contribute to growth in an “orderly” way. Hence, considerable importance has been attached to notions of “participation” and deliberative democracy (Prandini 2004);
- the value system legitimising the future European order
is based on the classic and modern notion of institutionalised (controlled) individualism (freedom), which stems from a combination of the liberal economic and political systems with the egalitarian tradition of Socialism. Policies are designed for adult, dependable, independent, mobile, and flexible individuals, with a high educational level, who are capable of making their way in society and reach their objectives: “these individuals enjoy complete freedom in their life choices; except when their actions impinge on other people’s freedom or on the life of people who are not free to decide” (Prandini 2006, 82-84).

This should have been realized through the development of the European Social Model from the recognition of the right to equal pay for men and women in the Treaty of Rome (1957) to agreement of a Social Policy Agenda in 2000 and the adoption of an open method of coordination (OMC) in employment (1997), social inclusion (2000) and pensions (2002). The Europeanization of significant aspects of economic policy and the pervasive differences across European welfare states in social outcome indicators and capacity for redistribution contribute to “the considerable constraints on the open method of coordination in social inclusion” (O’Connor 2005, 345). But, a new idea of inclusion asks for a specific space into new European welfare policies. Nevertheless, national welfare regimes (liberal, conservative-corporatist, social-democratic, universalistic) (Esping-Andersen 1990) can no longer be taken as the sole basis for comparison because, as many critics have noticed, this approach fails to take into account some key factors like family relationships and the gender dimension (Zanatta 1998).

Arts and Gelissen (2002) have been developed some critics towards Esping-Andersen in order to cope with the following alleged shortcomings of his typology: (1) the misspecification of the Mediterranean welfare states as immature Continental ones; (2)
labelling of the Antipodean welfare states as belonging to the ‘liberal’ regime type; (3) a neglect of the gender dimension in social policy. Let’s consider this last crucial point.

3. 1. Models of gendered welfare states

By explicitly incorporating gender, several authors (Lombardo and Meyer 2006; Daly 2000; Hantrais 2002, 2004; Korpi 2000) have tried to reconceptualise the dimensions of welfare state variation. Subjecting the mainstream welfare state typologies to an analysis of the differential places of men and women within welfare states would, according to them, produce valuable insights. Gender analysis suggests that there are whole areas of social policy that Esping-Andersen simply misses. What seems to be particularly lacking is a systematic discussion of the family’s place in the provision of welfare and care. Not only the state and the market provide welfare, but also families. A further omission is that there is no serious treatment of the degree to which women are excluded from or included in the labour market and the question of gender.

Lombardo and Meyer (2006) explore the extent to which a feminist reading of gender mainstreaming is incorporated in the European political discourse by analysing how family policy and gender inequality in politics are framed in European policy documents. Gender mainstreaming is treated as an open signifier that can be filled with both feminist and non-feminist content. The frame analysis of European documents on family policy and gender inequality in politics reveals but a partial adoption of a feminist understanding of gender mainstreaming and only in the area of gender inequality in politics (Lombardo and Meyer 2006).

In a similar way building on elements of existing feminist and mainstream comparative welfare state scholarship, Daly’s analytical
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framework is a triadic one (2000). It consists, in the first place, of dimensions which are designed to capture the distributive principles underpinning welfare state provision, namely: the treatment of ‘male’ and ‘female’ risks within the tax-benefit system; the construction of entitlement and treatment of different family types within the tax-benefit system; and the nature and extent of service provisions, especially care services. Second, the framework attempts to capture the processes through which welfare states construct gender relations. Daly describes these processes as “(de)familisation” (2000, 67), and specifies the construction of kinship obligations and the treatment of care work as two of the most critical. The final component of the framework is the resulting pattern of gender stratification. The dimensions of stratification that Daly is interested in span both income-related measures (inequality and poverty), as well as more qualitative measures (the construction of choices around paid work/care giving and marriage). It is the focus on outcomes and, more importantly, the relationship between social policy inputs and outcomes, which is perhaps the most valuable component of Daly’s study, both at the conceptual and empirical level. This is an element which has been largely absent from previous feminist comparative welfare state research, reflecting in part the legacy of Esping-Andersen’s 1990 study (it lacked any systematic analysis of the relationship between the three welfare state regimes and international variations in outcome measures), but also reflecting a long-standing division within comparative social policy research between studies of policies and micro-data policy outcome studies. Thus, while the former have tended to do no more than speculate on the possible outcomes of various institutional arrangements, the latter have lacked the detailed policy information to adequately account for variations in the patterning of outcomes. It is clear, though, from this study that measuring outcomes and relating inputs to outcomes,
particularly from the perspective of gender, remains a key challenge for comparative social policy researchers (Daly 2000).

As a standard of comparison, Hantrais (2000; 2004) has recently suggested a very interesting type of relationship between the family and the State. The ensuing classification shows the effects of *de-familisation* produced by various national family policies. De-familisation defines the degree of independence from family and kinship networks that citizens enjoy thanks to national welfare measures. This approach reveals that there is still much ambiguity in Europe with regards to the institution of the family (Prandini 2006, 93).

Korpi (2000) has distinguished between three ideal-typical models of gendered welfare state institutions of relevance to the above discussion. In this typology the distinction between paid and unpaid labour is of central importance, and institutionalized family policy measures are conceived in a two-dimensional space according to what consequences these measures have for the distribution of paid and unpaid work in the family and in society. More specifically, the categorization of social policy measures is based on whether a specified policy primarily contributes to the general support of a nuclear family (especially one of the single-earner type), or whether it is likely to enable and promote married women’s work and thus a dual-earner family. Thus, the *general family support* model is based on the presumption that the wife has the primary responsibility for caring and reproductive work within the family and enters paid work on a temporary basis as a secondary earner. In contrast, the *dual-earner support* model encourages women’s labour force participation by enabling parents, men as well as women, to combine parenthood with paid work and by attempting to create the conditions for a redistribution of caring work within the family. Countries where neither of the above two policy models is predominant would appear to have chosen to allow market forces to significantly shape gender
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relations, and these countries are consequently characterized as having a *market oriented* gender policy model.

Another criterion for comparison was identified in the so-called “male breadwinner regime”\(^\text{15}\); the principle based on the “Families of Nations” classification (Millar and Warmann 1996) considers the importance that national laws and social policies attach to family care obligations and responsibilities for the weakest members. In Europe, following this approach, three clusters of countries can be identified. In Scandinavian countries, which are characterised by minimum family obligations and direct state intervention, work-family reconciliation and family-friendly policies are inspired by an integrationist approach and are aimed at combining work and family life by preserving gender equality (in parental leave schemes and labour market flexibility) as well as children’s rights. In Continental Europe, unpaid care work falls on the nuclear family; work-family reconciliation is based on the segregation of unpaid family work and paid work – which do not occur concurrently, due to long parental leaves and the inadequate provision of childcare services. Finally, the third cluster is composed of southern European countries, where unpaid care work involves the extended family, and work-life strategies are mostly «family-oriented»: in this framework, all care responsibilities fall on women.

According to these indicators, especially Sweden and (to a somewhat lesser degree) Norway are characterized by high levels of dual-earner support (and medium levels of general family support). Countries characterized by having high levels of general family support (and medium levels of dual-earner support) are Italy,

\(^{15}\) It is based on the sexual division of labour, with a special focus on the allocation of unpaid care work to women and their financial and social dependency upon the male breadwinner. Hence, some strong or weak male breadwinner models can be identified (Lewis, 1992).
Germany, Austria, and the Netherlands. Australia, Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand and the USA are characterized by having low levels of both dual-earner and general family support. However, within the group with this family policy model, Canada and Great Britain have family measures of a sort that makes these countries score relatively high on the dual earner support dimension (Sjöberg 2004).

As we can already understand from above arguments, issues involved in the debate are gender, family and work, care and responsibility and social inclusion trough citizenship.

3.2. The citizenship of gender in the welfare state: inclusion, responsibility and care

As known today’s discussion of the future of social inclusion and citizenship, stressing two major issues: the crisis of the European social model (the national-level of social citizenship) and the integration problems in the development of the European Union (the transnational-level of social citizenship) (Roche and Van Berkel 1997; Taylor-Gooby 2004).

The notion of citizenship, especially in its political connotation, is closely linked to gender and in particular to participation in the public domain; philosophers had a fundamental representation of the roles of man and women. They were the key advocates of change and movement toward the future. Yet, nowhere in this picture of reform did they see women. Rousseau is one of the philosophers who did not believe that women were of great potential, or that they needed higher education. To him, men were above women. He believed that the man did not need the man, and still the woman needed the man. He thought that “the educations of men and women must be different because they are different”. Wollstonecraft, a feminist, expressed
an opinion much different than. She understood that from birth, a woman was educated in how she should act. She thought that men paid attention to the wrong qualities in women. She wanted for women to be able to show more than their femininity. To her, women were resilient and capable of caring for themselves: “women ought to have representatives, instead of being arbitrarily governed without any direct share allowed them in the deliberations of government” (Wollstonecraft 1992, 6). Women began to consider that the way they had been being treated might have not been fair. Women of the eighteenth century did not wish to have greater power then men. They only wished for equal rights. Today women want more.

Thus, women have to create a new meaning for citizenship, which had its foundations in the private domain. To do this instead of employing the all or nothing words ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’ to gender differences, it seems sensible to stress the importance of partial citizenship (Bulmer and Rees 1996; Arnot et al. 2000).

In the attempt to overcome this model (men/public and women/private domain), there developed a so-called “differentiated universalism” model (Lister 1997; 1998) in the field of gender studies. This approach commits to a universalistic orientation of policies to the valuing of difference within democratic processes. This model, however, highlighted the fact that, when it comes to practice, it is very complex to combine abstract and universal rights with the ones supported by a politics of difference (Young 1989), in other words, “to root citizenship rights in a notion of needs, which are seen as dynamic and differentiated, as against the universal and abstract vision of rights” (Taylor 1989, 27). On the whole, differentiated universalism consists in the articulation of women’s claims with regards to citizenship; women have always been faced with, on

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16 For an expounding of the notion of citizenship with a gendered perspective, please see Lister 1997, Walby 1997, Arnot et al. (2000), Bleijenbergh et al. (2004).
the one hand, universalistic claims – based upon the principle of equality between men and women – and, on the other hand, with particularistic claims – grounded in gender difference.

These claims represent the *gender-neutral model of citizenship* and the *gender-differentiated model of citizenship* respectively.

For example, Offen (1988) claimed that the traditional dichotomy between equality and difference derives from the thinking developed by a strand of “relational” feminism, which emphasizes women’s difference and their contribution in the framework of non-hierarchical relationships, underpinned by the values of care and solidarity. On the other hand, Offen also identified “individualist” feminism, which focuses on women, their rights and their claims to independence and autonomy. In both cases, it is a male standard against which women’s citizenship is measured, and where difference is conceived in binary rather than pluralistic terms.

To say that equality requires that women be treated alike when they are alike, and differently when they are different will often leave women vulnerable. For the traditionalist will respond that it is legitimate to discriminate against married women in the workplace because employers should be entitled to award plum jobs to workers who are not encumbered with family responsibilities that prevent them from devoting their full attention to their work. This is treating women differently because they are different. Is it consonant with the principle of gender equality for women? Clearly not. What these initial examples show is that treating women the same can leave women vulnerable (as in the case of alimony and custody reform) but treating women differently can leave them vulnerable as well. The language of sameness and difference is not only divisive; it is also confusing and analytically flawed.

Williams (2000) translates the "sameness/difference" policy debates into a new language and a new analytical framework:
“treating men and women the same is a strategy that works well where the goal is to eliminate the disabilities traditionally experienced by women, but it can backfire when applied to women's traditional privileges, for treating caregiving women the same as men who do not have caregiving responsibilities only exacerbates such women's gender disadvantage. To correctly apply the principle of treating men and women the same requires that formal equality be combined with an analysis of gender and power. Once this is accomplished, an analysis of masculine norms takes center stage. Where such norms exist, treating men and women the same will backfire unless they are first dismantled. Otherwise women will be further disadvantaged when they are treated the same as men in the face of norms that favor men because they are designed around men's bodies or life” (Williams 2000, 207)

Pateman summed up this situation as the “Wollstoncraft’s dilemma”, on the one hand, there are women who struggled to achieve full citizenship, according to the principles of liberal feminism; on the other hand, “women have also insisted... as did Mary Wollstonecraft, that as women they have specific capacities, talents, needs and concerns, so that the expression of their citizenship will be differentiated from that of men” (1989, 196 and ff.).

Wollstonecraft's book, The vindication of the rights of women, was written in 1792 and it is an example of an early woman writer who challenges the established order and who uses literature as her means of speaking out to the world. It is an insightful look into the life of women in the early portion of 18th century. It was a philosophical examination of the condition of women, in relationship to some very basic rights, and is also a very enlightening look at how short a distance we really have come, as a society, in relationship to perceptions of women. The author began her book with words which clearly illustrate her concerns: “after considering the historic
page, and viewing the living world with anxious solicitude, the most melancholy emotions of sorrowful indignation have depressed my spirits, and I have sighed when obliged to confess that either Nature has made a great difference between man and man, or that the civilization which has hitherto taken place in the world has been very partial” (1792, xi).

This dilemma seems to find a solution in the overall re-articulation of the divide between public and private spheres, where the relational understanding of concepts of equality and difference plays a key role.

In this regard, Pateman created a “dualistic or gender-differentiated model of citizenship” (1989, 14), which, in modern democracies, seems to be based upon the differentiation between “man-the-soldier” and the “woman-the-mother”. Basically, in order to attain citizenship rights, women must be like men; this also implies that they cannot become citizens as women in their own right.

This has problematised the relationship between individuals and citizenship, which had all too often been based upon men’s freedom from care tasks and responsibilities (Pateman 1988). This shift of household/domestic responsibility towards men would produce a new division of labour in a gendered perspective; more precisely, it would lead to a redefinition of the meaning and value of “public” (paid work) and “private”, (unpaid care work)17. With respect to another issue, social care, Daly and Lewis (2000) argue that different styles of social policy have incorporated the key element of social care differently; they identify certain tendencies concerning care in specific welfare states. In conclusion, women’s new proposals partly different from those that have gained favour so far are needed to push forward the construction of European citizenship and democracy from the

17 See the contribution of Strandh and Nilsson in chapter 5.
gender perspective. This requires a search for different political models (Rossilli 2000, Sjöberg 2004; Lewis 1999).

Nowadays, European gender policy reflects the contradictions women must face in their struggle for equality, which are common to most public gender policies. All provisions devised to progress in gender equality could have negative retroactive effects on women, due to the patriarchal context in which they are applied, showing how European gender policy could be still trapped in the “Wollstoncraft dilemma”. A more holistic approach to European gender policy, able to tackle all the areas of which patriarchy is composed, and an improved monitoring of European gender policy implementation in the member states, could both generate a more effective gender policy in the European and make further progress in solving the dilemma (Lombardo 2003).

As illustrated above, feminist scholars repeatedly emphasised the key role played by the family in constructing gender differences, especially with regards to women’s and men’s involvement in the political community; in this respect, women’s experience of and identification with motherhood and care tasks have been viewed as the main obstacles to achieving complete citizenship. In a framework where “equality” and “difference” become incorporated and complementary, motherhood – and care in general – will be an integral part of the notion of citizenship and women will no longer be construed solely as mothers or carers.

Pateman, despite her pessimistic attitude towards Wollstonecraft’s dilemma, identifies a point to achieve this objective: the proper allocation of responsibility, which citizenship carries for all citizens. This perspective also includes the argument for justice and care: these ethics should be viewed as complementary factors of the same problem, rather than as stand-alone solutions. This is acknowledged by a number of both justice and care theorists. In this regard, Okin
suggests that “justice has integral to it the notions of care and empathy, of thinking of the interests and well-being of others who may be very different from ourselves” (1989, 15).

Women obtained full civil and political rights a considerable time ago, but with regard to social rights, women are still discriminated against, sometimes formally, and nearly always informally because of different labour market positions, linked to different gender roles. According to many feminist authors, it is the sexual division of paid and unpaid work – especially care and domestic labour – that needs incorporating in the typology (Lewis 1992; O’Connor 1993; Orloff 1993; Sainsbury 1996; O’Connor et al. 1999).

Traditional gender-roles have been increasingly contested during the post-war period. Perhaps the most important challenge to the traditional division of labour between men and women in the industrialized world is the increase in women’s labour force participation. Parallel to this development, most countries have introduced family policy measures that not only have influenced the actual labour force participation of both women and men, but in their institutional arrangements also reflect normative views about the roles of women and men on the labour market and within the family sphere. The changing nature of the social division of paid and unpaid work between men and women has brought traditional beliefs and orientations towards family and work into question. Although a number of studies have shown that there has been increasing acceptance of non-familial roles for women (see e.g. Lu and Mason 1988; Scott et al. 1996; 1998), this development has also varied substantially between nations, and important differences still exist between countries regarding attitudes towards women’s labour force participation (see e.g. Alwin et al. 1992; Scott et al. 1998; Knudsen and Wæreness 2001; Poelmans et al. 2003) as well as other aspects of women’s social roles (see e.g. Stier, Lewin-Epstein and Braun 2001; Pfau-Effinger 2004).
Two different perspectives on explaining the role of family policy institutions are distinguished. Concerning the first perspective, gender-role attitudes will differ cross-nationally according to the capacity of family policy institutions to reconcile work in the home with work in the paid labour force. According to the second perspective, institutions such as family policies can give rise to a certain collection of norms regarding the ‘proper’ role of women in society. Cross-national variation\(^{18}\) in family policies will, according to this perspective, have important implications for gender-role attitudes primarily because it will affect what is seen as normatively appropriate behaviour, rather than affecting the returns expected from alternative choices (Sjöberg 2004; Saraceno and Naldini 2001; Kaufmann et al. 1998).

The gender equality ideal appears to be in strong evidence among today’s families with small children and in the public sector. It is even acceptable that men in relatively high positions can leave meetings at work, because they have to pick their children up from kindergarten. On the other hand, we are far from having realized any gender equality with respect to salary and career or with respect to workload in the home. Many parents of small children also probably “pay a high price in the form of a heavy workload when trying to live up to today’s ideal of gender equality” (Wæarness 2005, 23).

Tronto (1993) asserts that ethics of care cannot be divorced from notions of justice; justice should serve as a tool for the allocation of care responsibilities and benefits as well as to redress power inequalities that might surface between the providers and recipients of care.

\(^{18}\) The empirical analysis, using multilevel regression techniques on data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP 2003), indicates that variations in family policy models can contribute significantly to our understanding of cross-national variations in gender-role attitudes. It is also shown that the way gender-role attitudes are measured and conceptualized can have important implications for how cross-national differences in these attitudes are explained. See the website http://www.issp.org/data.htm.
The Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian feminist-oriented research on care have gradually approached each other and today we can point to three lines of development in this research with respect to the understanding of what care is:

- “from either feelings or (manual) work to both/and eventually also intellectual work;
- from the family via unpaid women’s work in the government’s service, to the state as either a women-friendly and/or shaky social service state;
- from focus on women as carers and care workers to a perspective that also includes those who need and receive care” (Wærness 2005, 18).

These factors provide a framework where the notion of interdependence, which lies at the core of human relationships (and of care in particular), is attached the right value and meaning, while preserving the feminist critique of women’s economic dependence on men and of the ensuing denial of autonomy.

Although women’s independence has always been construed as a key element to achieve full citizenship and women’s economic dependence on men has been perceived as the main obstacle to its achievement, interdependence between genders does not always place women on the receiving side. It is also important to consider men’s dependence on women for care, whereby men are supported as citizens and workers (Thompson and Walker 1989; Finch and Mason 1993).

Both of these development trends will lead to greater gender equality, but “the latter trend will also result in greater social differences between women in a way that probably will also reduce the chance of care values gaining a bigger place in the political discourse” (Wærness 2005, 24). Regardless of how we might assess today’s development trends with respect to distribution of
care responsibilities, we need greater political focus on working conditions for those care workers who perform the specific everyday care of our children, the sick, disabled and elderly. We also need political focus on what division of responsibility and labour in care we want to have and what division actually exists between the family and the political authorities. Basically, women’s autonomy cannot be reduced to a sort of atomistic liberal individualism; autonomy is only made possible through the human relationships that generate it and the social structures that support it.

4. The heart of the matter: the relationship between gender, family and work in Europe

When looking at the European context (Rossi 2006; Abrahamson, Boje and Greve 2005; Frone 2002; Hantrais 2004), it appears that the work-family balance has been undergoing a gradual deterioration that has eventually made these two vital aspects of everyday life and adult identity incompatible.

With the growth of the industrial market economy during the past 300 years (Googins 1991; Coontz 1992), began a trend which segmented activities associated with generating income and caring for family members. Before the advent of industry and the growth of market economies, a large amount of production was done by families primarily for their own consumption. However, the more industrialized the market economy became, the more that workplaces were created outside of the home and organizations other than families were in charge of production.

The development of work-family conflict is placed along the transition from Fordist capitalism – based on industrial production and the entry of the working masses in the factories – to a late modern (or post-Fordist) capitalism. It
originated in the advent of capitalism in modern society, as a result of the strict separation between the domestic and work spheres and paid and unpaid work; this led to an overload of care responsibilities and a “double burden” for women.

In the last twenty years, social orders have changed radically; the traditional family model where the male breadwinner was the sole source of income has given way to a dual-earner model. Young women attain higher educational and/or vocational qualifications, just like their male peers; however, they find it harder to strike a balance between family responsibilities and full-time employment.

As industrialization accelerated, the term ‘work’ became synonymous with ‘employment’. While there was diversity in employment and in family situations, in general, work and family activities after the industrial revolution were carried out in different places, at different times, with different sets of people, and with different norms for behaviour and expressed emotion. Thus, today “most workplaces and homes have cultures and expectations distinct from each other” (Clark 2000, 748).

Within this changing framework, the flexibility, the irregularity, the unpredictability and the insecurity of the labour market have blurred the boundaries between different spheres of everyday life, and namely between family and work.

Moreover, women’s emancipation process and the improvement of the female condition through the mass entry of women into the workforce – as provided for by the 2000 Lisbon Declaration – not only had an impact on the increase of school enrolment rates but, importantly, it also led to the employment of several women with more qualified positions than the past (especially when compared with the 1950’s and the 1960’s). As noticed above, greater labour market flexibility, its ensuing competitiveness and the growth of
female labour have brought about increasing problems in reconciling work and family life.

4.1. Work and family: a difficult balance

Work-family balance has been defined as “the degree to which an individual is able to simultaneously balance the temporal, emotional, and behavioural demands of both paid work and family responsibilities” (Hill et al. 2001, 49), and prior research has shown that work-family balance is related to indicators of overall well-being (e.g. Marks and MacDermid 1996).

Both work and care imply ethical codes and practices about how, in moral terms, people believe they ought to live their lives. However, these two ethics shape experiences in both contexts and may cross the work-family boundary. For some authors caring is a moral practice (Tronto 1993; Finch and Mason 1993), which is not contained within family or kinship contexts. Likewise, the business ethic is also transgressive as I have suggested when work-family boundaries are weakened. Moreover, the business ethic may permeate family life more easily than the reach of the care ethic into working life. For much of family life is subject to economistic notions of time, notably via the pressures of the market and consumerism.

The study of the work-family interface invites a focus upon time and the notion of time as having a plurality of meanings (Brannen 2002, Daly 1996; Hill et al. 2001). Many employees expect and are expected to use time purposefully – ‘time is a project’. In contrast, as people enter territories outside paid work, they may draw upon different concepts of time such as taking ‘time out’. Time here is used less purposefully: it passes or is ‘spent’ with children, partners, relatives and friends (Brannen 2005).

Family life is increasingly shaped by consumerism and becomes
a ‘project’ as parents subscribe to notions of the child as project (Hallden 1991).

Caring, however, is a practice and a moral activity which involves relationships and reciprocity; thus it does not readily accommodate economic notions of time – how much time can be spent on a particular activity and with what cost implications.

Those who are most ‘work busy’ are those in dual income households who have care responsibilities for children. Such working parents stand in marked contrast to those whose present time hangs heavily – those with no jobs to go to and fewer resources to enable them to fill their time, such as unemployed lone parents and the poor elderly.

In some families, economic notions of time may be more dominant than in others. In some work contexts the basis for the development of caring relations between workers is weakened through the intensification of work. Yet even for the ‘work busy’, there is an inherent contradiction between time in work and time devoted to care. On the one hand, the dual income lifestyle is driven by Marx’s notion of ‘time as commodity’ (Daly, 1996): time here has an economic price aimed at the production of profit and efficiency and high income generation in order to bring in the resources to sustain a lifestyle. On the other hand, family life and care responsibilities are construed in relation to notions of morality (Finch 1989; Finch and Mason 1993; Tronto 1993; Smart and Neale 1998; Daly and Lewis 1999). In the ‘moral economy of time’, time ought to be given freely and should not be costed or measured. ‘Family time’ and ‘quality time’ are today’s symbols of a ‘proper’ family life (see Daly 1996).

As people spend less time in social interaction in the workplace and are treated individualistically, so workplace cultures generate feelings of individual insecurity.

Family time has connotations of process rather than commodity;
for social interaction is the purpose as well as the outcome of spending time and is not simply a means to an instrumental end. Yet commodity time – what Daly (1996) calls ‘a new kind of impatience’ – seems to be the kind of time that is winning out among families, increasing numbers of whom are driven by work. As Hochschild (1997) claims: work environments for some professional couples were seen as preferable to the increasingly onerous, ‘taylorized’ character of family life.

One of the most significant consequences has been the increasing lack of care services not only under a quantitative but also under a qualitative viewpoint: the considerable increase in flexibility and working time variability cannot be tackled or managed through service management plans with standardised and rigid schedules. The tension between combining family and professional life, partly due to lack of child care and insufficiently flexible working conditions, appears to be contributing to the postponement of having the first child and to low fertility rates in most Member States. However, experience shows that Member States having comprehensive policies to reconcile work and family life for both men and women show higher fertility rates as well as higher labour market participation of women. The integration of a gender dimension into policies will contribute to attaining the overall Lisbon objectives.

Moreover, in the context of the blurring of boundaries (Lange and Jurzick 2006) between work and family life, the business ethic crosses the borders into family and caring responsibilities.

Functional differentiation between work and family follows some specific mechanisms: systems become specialised by surrendering some tasks and clearly separating them; the subsystems thus differentiated (family and work) are self-referential. In this type of differentiation, therefore, the subsystemic symbolic code dominates. Thus, on the one hand, we experience an emotional closure of the
family, which finds it difficult to regenerate itself as such, while, on the other hand, we notice an instrumental closure and an increasing dehumanisation of work. Where this happens the contradictions or disjunctions become stark. Without any institutional or group mechanisms to defray or diffuse these, the individual is left to ‘cope’ alone. He or she must negotiate on an individual basis with their employers, for example to work flexibly, and must draw upon their own sources of support.

Relational differentiation, on the contrary, is governed by different procedures: the specialization of different areas of life or subsystems occurs through some new forms of interchange, with spillover functions; subsystems, in their turn, specialise for their interrelations, following a code of mutual referencing (Donati 2005a, 66-69).

It is clear that even more recent studies and research about family well-being consider that the relation with external spheres of individuals’ life is really important for the whole well-being of the family itself. The work-family relationship, therefore, comes out as being a relational good in itself (Donati 2005a; Siaroff 2004; Val Gillies 2005).

The wider context of the trade-off between work and maternity is not just a matter of changing preferences. For individuals and couples, questions concerning work and family always involve either-or choices, but these choices are likely to be more or less difficult depending on the policy environment in which they are made. Under this heading fall a wide range of the nostrums of contemporary family policy, although the focus of the literature in this area has, until recently, been “far more concerned with the identification of factors promoting high levels of female employment than with the location of policy determinants of cross-national fertility variation” (Castles 2003, 219).

The condition of women is currently characterised by the need
to find a difficult balance between different roles and time demands. Naturally, this sensitive task does not only concern women, but it also inevitably brings into play the desires, the expectations and the rights of the families where women live. Moreover, a work-life balance is not achieved merely by means of interventions restricted to single subjects belonging to some specific groups (like women or children). On the contrary, an effective approach should envisage a series of social policy measures and actions that promote a balance between different areas of life – namely work commitments and care responsibilities – while considering all the subjects involved in the process and, in particular, the family.

4.2. From another point of view: family spill over to work

The conflict (or bad negotiation) between work and family is often seen as a divergence that could negatively influence family life, while recent studies realized that this negative pressure is one of the main cause for decline of employees’ work.

In today’s fast pace competitive society, there is a significant underlying issue in every industry across all staffing levels which surround the issues of work life integration (Fagan et al. 2005; Hantrais 2002). It is more than a buzzword or human resource policy; it is a key component in understanding work retention, job satisfaction and career development for women. It is no longer about balance because balance implies that work and life are opposites of each other instead employees and employers need to view work-life as a well-integrated whole. The growing concern of work life integration is that it crosses over in other issues of the business, attract and retain quality staff, staff retention/turnover, health and wellness of employee and productivity. The strongest factors associated with an employee's ability to integrate work and family is a supportive
supervisor and workplace culture.

Research over the last two decades has provided ample evidence of continuing and increasing rates of work-family conflict and workplace stress for men and women. Such stress has been shown to result in distress and dissatisfaction at work and at home, as well as mental and physical health problems (e.g. Duxbury and Higgins 2001, Frone et al. 1997; Frone 2002; Greenhaus and Parasuraman 1999). This has serious consequences, both for workers and for their families, and for organizations that fail to benefit from talented employees and incur additional costs in absenteeism, turnover, recruitment costs, and lost productivity.

Byrne (2005) discusses the development of the concept of the ‘work-life balance’ as a means of tackling the problem of increasing amounts of stress in the workplace as people try to juggle a wide range of factors in their life/work environment, including work and family. It is argued that, of the factors involved, work is the one which is most elastic and can be managed in such a way as to avoiding jeopardizing the other factors. A major driver of the trend towards achieving work-life balance is the fact that younger people are not prepared to work in the same way as their parents, wanting greater control, and a bigger say in the structure of their jobs and what they could potentially offer in the future. The search for work-life balance is a process in which people seek to change things in accordance with changes in their own priorities, physical, psychological or both, and these can be triggered in their turn by individual’s factors; “the achievement of better work-life balance can yield dividends for employers in terms of: having a more motivated, productive and less stressed workforce that feels valued attracting a wider range of candidates” (Byrne 2005, 58). The author considers some of the issues which might arise when implementing a work-life balance strategy and offers advice on implementing such a scheme.
1. Gender mainstreaming and reconciliation policies

Another set of studies, largely done in the European Union (European) adopted a more macro-level strategy: examples include Deven and Moss’s (2002) excellent review of maternity and family leave policies and Stier et al.’s (2001) analysis of how different policy contexts affect women’s employment and earnings over the life span, as well as work by den Dulk et al. (1999) and Poelmans et al. (2003). These researches has identified the critical importance of public policies that affect women’s labour force patterns, earnings, and opportunities for economic and social equality. Such factors include social expectations about men’s and women’s roles, overall approaches to state-market-family relationships; and family-, gender-, and employment-supportive policies (such as public provisions for maternity and parental leave and benefits, family leave, and tax policies and social programmes that include publicly funded childcare).

In Korabik et al. (2003) view, it is critical that researchers and policy makers appreciate how different countries’ responses to a variety of imperatives shape the need for and likelihood of workplace modifications and employer-employee negotiations, recognizing that these will still play out differently depending on firm size and culture and for different groups of employees.

Godard focuses on government policy because this reflects a society’s “political structures, policy traditions, social norms and power relations” (1997, 252). Work organizations can affect governments, that multiple levels of government can be involved, and that it can be difficult for governments to alter the traditional rules, norms, practices, and beliefs that underlie most employer policies, especially when these are deeply embedded. Inevitably, employees will have to address some of these barriers as individuals and within families. But as long as the focus is on work-family policies that are organized at the employer level, especially in departments reserved for this
purpose such as human resources, they are unlikely to be offered to workers at all levels and will remain marginalized with limited impact on the prevailing gendered model of work and separation of work and family spheres (Lewis and Haas 2005).

Thornthwaite (2004) compares data from a number of studies on working time preferences in order to explore the relative strength of different preferences, the factors underpinning differences among employees, areas of strongest unmet demand, and the implications that these findings suggest for HR policy.

For working parents, ‘balancing’ work and family involves establishing some degree of workable and acceptable combination of the two. Ultimately, “an individual’s experience of balance rests upon a perception of satisfactorily resolving the multiple and often incompatible demands of work and family roles. Research suggests that an essential element of balance is some autonomy in how working parents manage their roles within these constraints. Each strategy requires that working parents have some autonomy to adapt their working time arrangements in response to life-cycle and parenting phase” (Thornthwaite 2004, 176).

The particular working time needs and preferences of working parents vary within and between countries. Although this prevents any simplistic transfer of findings, the differences throw into sharper relief those consistencies to which surveys point. Also critical is the household model, based on three factors: the number of resident parents, and income earners, and the proportion working full-time and part-time. Employees’ preferences also vary according to gender, occupation, career orientation, and country. In particular, there is a strong, unmet demand among working parents for shorter working

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19 This article focuses on the findings of some of the largest studies from Australia, Western Europe, the USA and Canada on employees’ preferences for working time arrangements that facilitate work-family balance.
hours, part-time work and flexible working time: preferences vary according to life-cycle stage and parenting phase, defined by the age of the youngest child in a household and other factors. One of the challenges for human resources management, therefore, is “to make family-friendly working time arrangements a real option for all employees within an organization and to experiment with, and market effectively the benefits of family-friendly policies in organisations” (Thornthwaite 2004, 180-181).

The conclusion is an understanding of the individual and organizational variables, workplace policies, and mechanisms of support that can ease work-family conflict and can guide to the formulation of public policies and organizational practices aimed at reducing these negative consequences. The manner in which much research on the work-family interface has been carried out, however, has often made it difficult to attain this goal. In most of the previous work-family research that has been conducted globally, the focus has been either on the micro- or the macro-level, but not both.

So, family-friendly issues need to be mainstreamed and that the concerns of families should be added to those of the state, trade unions and employers on the agenda for negotiating work-life balance. It is also argued that the focus and scope of industrial relations need to be rethought to take account of the gendered nature of employment relationships (Hantrais and Ackers 2005). It is all too easy to tag equal opportunities onto the existing list of industrial relations ‘issues’ (Wajcman 2000). The focus and scope of industrial relations need to be rethought if we are to grasp the gendered nature of European employment relationships. The development of social policy at European level. As Ackers (2002a) has argued, all this calls for a reframing of the institutional context of working lives.

Organizational analysis is important, but if industrial relations takes the worker-employer “employment relationship as its core”
(Hantrais and Ackers 2005, 211), study indicates that it will not be enough to suggest a semi-permeable membrane (Edwards 2003) between work and family life. According to this approach, only at certain moments and with certain policies (for example, on equal opportunities and family friendliness) will the membrane open to family choices and policies. On the contrary, we would suggest that working arrangements are endemic to the choices that families make and vice versa. For instance, if joint regulation is to be a conduit for equal opportunities, family-friendly issues need to be a mainstream part of the bargaining agenda (Ackers 2002b, 2003). Even at European and national levels, policies need to be shaped by an understanding of women’s (and men’s) family needs, not just by narrow and short-term business needs. Dickens’s (1999) tripod must perforce become a ‘quadripod’, adding the active individuals that make up a family to the agencies of the state, trade unions, and employers and also recognizing families as social actors.

5. Reconciliation policies: what, why and how

5.1. Reconciliation policies and gender mainstreaming

Reconciliation is a word that was first used in the early 1990’s in European Community documents to identify the principle underlying Community’s directives, briefings, recommendations and suggestions addressed to Members States in order to encourage them to support family-friendly policies. Work-family reconciliation policies include all those arrangements intentionally or unintentionally promoting a balance between paid work and care responsibilities and all the strategies aimed at balancing conflicting time demands in
order to reduce time conflicts in everyday life (Scisci and Vinci 2002, 2005; Donati 2005a, Rossi 2006; McManus et al. 2005; OECD 2001; Parcel 2006). In the ten-year period from 1990 and 2000, European Community policies were mainly focused on the promotion of work-family balance. The provision of care services for children and other people who are not self-sufficient is one of the hardest challenges facing future European society.

Even if work-family reconciliation issues have been on the national and especially on the European political agenda – although they are treated with varying degrees of importance in different countries – in the last few years, the compelling questions arising from the relationship between these two aspects of adult identity led to increased work-family conflict and to a greater demand for actions and policies to meet work-family needs, in line with the indications of the European Masterplan.

In March 2000, the Council of Europe held in Lisbon set out some daring and ambitious goals, whereby the European Union set out to become, within ten years, the most dynamic, competitive, and sustainable knowledge-based economy of the world, in a framework of full employment20 and stronger social and economic cohesion (the so-called Lisbon strategy). The Council also identified new objectives for women in employment, basically aimed at increasing female employment rates.

One of the main new elements introduced in the Lisbon document concerned infact employment targets, and namely female employment rates. Until then, European governments had aimed at reducing unemployment rates and thus decrease the number of unemployed people, not of inactive people, who are on the margins of the labour market. Since the Lisbon Council,

20 The objective was to make Europe the "most competitive continent in the world", increasing productivity and employing twenty million more people within ten years.
national governments have set the target of raising the working-age population in employment in the European to US levels (70%), the female employment rate to 60% and the older workers employment rate (concerning people aged between 55 and 64) to 50%: all this by the year 2010. Consequently, there was a need for new initiatives to increase employment in order to meet the challenge of an ageing society, including providing adequate pensions for women and men. Particular attention must be paid to mobilising the full potential of female employment and to boosting labour market participation of older women and immigrant women who have the lowest employment rates (European Communities Commission 2005b, 2005c).

In particular, the Lisbon Council invited the Commission and Member States to promote all aspects concerning equal opportunities in the field of employment policies, including the reduction of occupational segregation and the possibility to balance work and family life. Therefore, new benchmarking standards were set to enhance childcare services and recommendations were made for a full women’s integration in the so-called new economy. Further, since information and communication technologies (ICT) have an increasing influence in all economic fields, it becomes essential to foster and mainstream ways of giving women equal access to the knowledge-based economy as well as helping them to participate in it.

The common objective was not only to promote a balance between work and family responsibilities – which is needed to achieve the Lisbon targets – but also to solve some of the increasing problems affecting several countries, such as lower and later fertility and the ensuing ageing of the population. These problems, set within a European framework of public spending cuts, make it difficult to maintain and sustain the type of welfare state that has been maintained so far.

The green paper called “Equality and non-discrimination in an
enlarged European Union” of May 2004, states that “changes to attitudes and behaviour require sustained effort and action to back up legislation with concrete measures”. Each Member State as well as the European are starting to mainstream the gender dimension, which involves incorporating equality between men and women in all policies and at all stages of the policy-making process by means of specific measures. This is stated in the European Commission Report on parity between men and women (2004), which reads: “inequality between women and men is a multidimensional phenomenon that has to be tackled by a comprehensive mix of policy measures. The challenge is to ensure policies that support equal opportunities for women and men in education, employment and career development, entrepreneurship, equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, better sharing of family responsibilities, balanced participation of women and men in decision-making and the elimination of gender-based violence”.

These efforts call, above all, for a consideration of the value, the cultural construction and the ethical dimension of work-life balance and of the appropriate social policies that could promote and support it. The key role and the interconnection between fertility and employment among women, as well as the influence of the gender system and, on the whole, of the welfare system are corroborated by the results of the latest European Labour Force Survey (Eurostat 2005).

On 14 February 2005, the European Commission issued a report on equality between men and women. This report shows the main developments in the relative situation of women and men in education, employment and social life (European Commission 2005b).

But it emphasises that reconciling work and family life remains a problem (and a lonely/solitary task) for many women. For instance women with children have lower employment rates than those
without; the majority of domestic work is still carried out by women; and the lack of affordable childcare remains an obstacle to equality. Women’s lower participation in the labour market means that their pension entitlements are significantly lower than those of men. Gaps between older men and women are more acute, with elderly women more at risk of poverty than men.

In order to address the new problems arising from work-family demands, European reconciliation policies are basically hinged on three pillars: “care, cash and time” (Millar 2006, 189). These measure are concerned with: firstly (care), ensuring care for children and young generations through the increased provision of services and their increased suitability to different contexts; secondly (cash), financial support to families in need through cash benefits or tax breaks; thirdly (time), a better temporal organisation of family life, through the extension of parental or sick leave, and compulsory paternal leave.

Work-family reconciliation has been widely understood as the attempt to achieve a work-family balance. Its declared aim is to create a sort of balance between these two spheres of life so as to resolve the conflict underlying the problems related to the temporal organisation of daily life. Consequently, reconciliation measures are mainly designed for some critical times – such as the birth of a child or times of sickness – and to a much lesser extent for the routine management of daily life.

Issues concerning work-family balance have been recognised as being key to the achievement of equal opportunities. These matters need to be addressed by means of appropriate social policies in all European Member States. Work-family reconciliation is a sensitive issue arising from the current demographic trends of populations and the care needs they originate; it has implications for a range of different policy fields like employment, labour organisation, social
protection, and family policies and it mainly concerns women, “who still have to shoulder most of burden of care work” (Grecchi 2001, 91). The European Union has laid out some principles to inform the design of more effective family-friendly policies in all Member States. On several occasions, the European gave some guidelines to balance the multiple roles of working mothers and to assist women to combine work and family life. In short, the European recommends Member States:

- a labour policy protecting women who decide to have children by means of incentives and by guaranteeing their reinstatement in the labour market. Consequently, part-time and fixed-term employment should be promoted;
- a rescheduling of opening hours for urban public services (shops, offices, and schools) in order to grant greatest flexibility and thus make it easier for parents with work and family time constraints;
- a public service policy able to establish a valid network of welfare and support services around families;
- increased men’s participation in children’s care and upbringing;
- a welfare policy targeting non-working mothers, who are strongly penalised in welfare systems where housewives are not recognised any value for their domestic work.

In fact, European legislation in this field is still very poor: “it is done by means of recommendations and directives that have to be ratified and implemented by each Member State. So far, directives in this domain have mainly been concerned with parental leave, night work for women and the promotion of equal opportunities” (Donati 2005b, 11).

Work-family policy comes in a wide variety of forms (see Kamerman and Kahn 1981; Gornick et al. 1997; Castles 2003), each
with somewhat different implications for encouraging higher rates of fertility among working women. At one end of the spectrum are measures capturing aspects of traditional population policy making it possible for women to leave the labour force on a more or less permanent basis. Prominent among these are child benefits and tax allowances compensating for a woman’s loss of income when she stays at home to look after children. At the other end of the spectrum is the provision of child-care facilities, with viable arrangements for children aged 0-3 crucial to early labour force re-entry.

The idea is that if individuals have the means to purchase services that reduce the additional workload consequent on maternity, it will be easier to combine employment and fertility. The same applies where child-care services are cheaply available or are freely provided by the state. Women are also likely to feel more secure in temporarily absenting themselves from the labour force to have children if their right to re-entry is written into law and if their absence from work is compensated by generous parental leave arrangements.

These reconciliation measures, placed within a diversified context of social – or else gender or family – policies, can thus be identified, according to the different approaches used, as: gender or equal opportunities policies; policies aimed at only one of the subjects concerned (children, women, lone women, and the elderly) and not at the family as a whole; or, finally, workfare policies, where a work-focused problem-solving approach prevails.

Undoubtedly, each of these approaches have some strengths; however, they also contain some significant weaknesses. As a result, it would be necessary to adopt an approach to work-family reconciliation – and to the development of social and family-friendly policies – so that the wide variety of factors and stakeholders involved would be taken into account and, at the same time, the different aspects of this phenomenon (resources, objectives, local
culture, and norms) would be interconnected by regarding work-family balance as a social relationship.

5.2. Looking at different European models of reconciliation policies: perspectives and debates

Work-family measures in different countries are the outcome of different social policies that take into account aspects related to work, gender roles, family models and different welfare strategies mentioned above. National context is relevant to work-family issues because employees' work-family balance can be supported by national policies and programs (Haas, Hwang and Russell 2000).

This said, there are still some differences in the implementation and the concrete outcome of different family-friendly perspectives and in the emerging guidelines for the future. In this respect, it should be noted that, in different social and geographical contexts, concepts of work-family reconciliation have different contents and objectives, which reflect the different features of local welfare systems and their different ways of implementing equal opportunities. National gender equality reflects a society's support for women's development and achievements, and recognition of the importance of including women in all aspects of life (UNDP 2002).

Three aspects are particularly relevant. The first is the necessity of considering how research on work-family relationships can be undertaken in different countries in ways that both capture and respect the influence of different values and accepted roles within each culture. The second is the importance of accounting for how differences in social policies and programmes are likely to affect both the extent of work-family conflict individuals (especially women) experience, and the significance of workplace supports and negotiations to reduce work-family conflict. The third is the value
of testing and extending theories and hypothesized relationships in ways that are both rigorous and culturally sensitive.

Prior cross-cultural research has found that countries differ, for example, in beliefs about appropriate roles and behaviour for men and women; in some countries, men and women occupy highly differentiated roles based on biological sex, such as male breadwinners and female caregivers/homemakers, whereas in other countries men and women occupy more similar or overlapping social roles (Emrich et al. 2004; Hofstede 1980). National gender equality is related to work and family issues because traditional expectations that women will be responsible for their children can be a significant barrier to women’s employment opportunities (Haas 2003). Therefore, gender equality cannot be achieved without societal recognition of the need to provide resources and support to help employees manage both work and family responsibilities. Also, in gender egalitarian societies women are more likely to be included in decision-making roles where they can influence policies to reflect the importance of work-family issues (Lyness and Brumit Kropf 2005, 35-36).

Lyness and Brumit Kropf (2005) developed a model suggesting that the degree of national gender equality is an important contextual variable that is positively related to organizational work-family supports (i.e. supportive work-family culture and flexible work arrangements), which are in turn related to individuals’ balance of their work and family responsibilities. Although there are many aspects of national context to consider, it is clear that the degree of gender equality is particularly relevant to work and family issues. By national gender equality, we mean the extent to which national cultures support women’s development and achievements, and recognize the importance of including women in all aspects of life (UNDP 002). National gender equality may be related to work and
family issues because “it seems unlikely that gender equality in employment opportunities will be achieved without recognition and support for employees’ needs to balance work with critical family responsibilities” (Lyness and Brumit Kropf 2005, 34).

Different welfare systems in Europe are characterised by different degrees of responsibility on the part of the social actors involved, namely the family and, on the other hand, the institutions.

Firstly, there are Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland), where work-family reconciliation is addressed using a social-democratic approach. The State tends to resort to a heavy regulation of the market and sometimes even replace it; in the same way, it tends to replace the family as the provider of care services. Work-family balance is thus viewed as guaranteeing the highest female employment and, at the same time, ensuring universal access to equal services for all, both men and women. The State tends to protect women especially as workers, much less so as wives and mothers. This is because, on the one hand, it calls upon men to undertake family responsibilities and, on the other hand, because it encourages the creation of all kinds of family-support services outside the family. Emancipated individuals and communal services: this blend is deemed to solve the problems connected to work-family reconciliation.

Then, there are central European countries (France, Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg), which adopt a conservative-corporatist approach to work-family reconciliation. The family is the best solution to provide small children with the care they need, so much so that it is acceptable for a parent to leave his/her professional occupation even for extended periods of time to

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21 For an overview on these aspects see also: Castles and Mitchell 1993; Millar and Warmann 1996; Hantrais and Letablier 1996; Abrahamson, Boje and Grøve 2005; Donati 2003a, 2005a.
look after the family. Family responsibilities are supported by means of measures championed by union organisations defending the rights of the parents’ occupational group. This model differs from the previous one in that the family here is considered as an institution mediating between the individual and society, which is also why some tasks are not recognised and allocated to it.

The third model groups the traditionally liberal islands (Great Britain and Ireland), where work-family reconciliation is dealt with by means of a conservative-liberal approach: it is conservative in that, as it happens in Continental Europe, it is deemed that the family is important to provide children with care. On the other hand, it is liberal because the State, after ensuring a minimum support, delegates the provision of support measures to families and civil society. The State does not aim to replace the family or even support it above the bare minimum; on the contrary, it leaves it all to families. Work-family reconciliation is considered as a political action to sustain women’s labour market participation and ensure them basic support for a decent lifestyle. The rest is left to the independent action of civil society.

The fourth model includes Mediterranean countries (Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Greece), which take a conservative corporatist-family-oriented approach to work-family reconciliation (Naldini 2003). They are conservative in that their dominant culture invests the family with a greater role as a social institution that in other countries. They are corporatist in that they design welfare measures according to the occupational status of family members. Finally, they are family-oriented in that they entrust the family with more responsibilities that in other countries. Work-family reconciliation is considered as a political action that gives quite limited and unstable support to encourage women’s labour market participation; this results in the poor development of external services and in little
benefits for women, who have to undertake multiple roles inside and outside the family.

In short, policies can be placed on a continuum embracing the following options: in some countries (Italy, Spain, and Portugal), negotiation is left to the private spheres of the couple or local communities, so that each family can decide on the best way to use the existing policies and consider the possibilities available to them; in other countries, the market – the supply and the demand of services – regulates choices (the UK and Ireland) or anyway, like in the mixed-model approach (the Netherlands, France and Germany), the involvement of the public sphere is minimal; finally, the interventionist model (Sweden, Norway) assigns most of the mediation and problem solving responsibilities with regard to work-family issues to the State which, in order to achieve the set goals, imposes decisions and modes of managing the work-family relationship.

Despite these differences, all the models seem to be enthused with individualistic principles, which focus on individuals and their condition in terms of work and care responsibilities within the family. However, when designing social policy provisions, they ignore relationships and family networks. It follows that, ultimately, the individual is entrusted with the task of mediating between the two spheres or, alternatively, he/she has to choose which sphere to favour, with the risk of producing a schizophrenic situation as well as an aggravation of relations in both fields with no realistic consideration of gender dimension.

These policies are still inspired by a Lib-Lab approach\textsuperscript{22}, which often fails to consider – or deliberately ignores – the relationships existing between the subjects involved, thus creating serious

\textsuperscript{22} Liberistic versus laburistic/socialistic approach (see Donati 2003).
problems for the actors in charge of the management of everyday life. Family-friendly policies appear to be largely adjustment policies, which attempt often shaky combinations of the spheres of work and family without introducing radical changes that could actually do away with conflict.

Over the last ten years, in order to avoid the risks associated with this individualistic perspective, there have been several calls for a redesign of the welfare state and, more precisely, “for a shift from the welfare state to a welfare society” (Donati 1999, 63). This does not mean devolving tasks from central to local authorities nor does it simply involve mere denationalisation, like in the privatisation of services.

The objective is to enable each individual to meet his/her expectations regarding both work and family by means of work-family reconciliation policies.

The first point to consider is the virtual equivalence between “family-friendly” and “adjustment” policies: these policies strive to achieve an often unstable combination between the two spheres of family and work; when faced with the complexity of the relationships between these two spheres of life, they only tend to consider the gender (and often only the female) dimension rather than the relationships existing between the subjects concerned.

Secondly, as it ensues from the studies illustrated above, it is important to note that it is difficult to actually realise a real and effective negotiation between work and family (involving individuals and companies, and possibly actors of the civil society operating in between): this mediation is mostly regulated by a third party – usually the State – that, on each single occasion, structures work-family actions according to the dominant welfare and family models of the country concerned; these measures rarely result directly from the relationship between work and family. The way in which
this third party handles mediation is therefore decisive for the very outcome of reconciliation measures: this system might also be negative because, being it mandatory, it implies the impossibility to choose alternative solutions. This shift implies first of all an overall reorganisation of society, which should be built upon four pillars (State, market, associations, families) that should become the four cornerstones of society and key factors underlying social policies, no longer in conflict with each other but components of a complex relational system.

Furthermore, moving from the welfare state to a welfare society implies, together with a review of relationships between the civil society and the political and administrative system, a review of the very idea of citizenship: “it means pursuing a deep citizenship” (Donati 1999, 64), whereby each individual of the community wins greater freedom but, on the other hand, takes on greater commitments and burdens. This increase in collective responsibilities towards the problems to be addressed by social policies should nonetheless be met by greater collective participation in the production of citizenship as a relational good. This would yield a social citizenship based on a covenant made by each citizen (whether individuals or collective bodies) with the political community, enhancing the connection between their freedoms and their responsibilities for the attainment of the common good.

The welfare models known so far and the latest attempts to forge a compromise between liberalism and socialism (Lib-Lab) through the development of some new mixed models (neo-Lib-Lab), however, show some limitations, in that they are still characterised

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23 On example of this is the debate emerging in several Scandinavian countries with regard to the possibility to also have a free choice concerning children’s education inside the home and the choice made by some mothers to devote themselves to the care of their children instead of being in paid employment (Abrahamson, Boje and Greve 2005).
by an ambiguous relationship between political and administrative systems and civil society. In this way, they lead to a reciprocal impoverishment by means of – among other things – forms of social control that, as noticed above, promote individualism instead of social solidarity. Realising the limitations and the structural flaws of the Lib-Lab model could lead to the “… alternative notion of a society characterised by competitive solidarity or… a society based on solidarity subsidiarity” (Donati 1999, 66).

A comparative analysis should, by means of comprehensive interpretive schemes that take into account the differences between the various countries involved, inspire reflection on the family and its specific role in society. This would lead to the next level of theoretical and empirical reflection in the fields of work-family reconciliation research and policies and, at the same time, pay due attention to the gender dimension. In other words, it would create a virtuous circle between knowledge of family forms and relationships, gender dimensions and their interrelationships, which would consequently enable to identify effective family-friendly policies.

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Conclusions: Some unsolved dilemmas and the risk of forgetting family

Isabella Crespi

Although some significant improvements have certainly been made – especially in terms of women’s emancipation, gender equity and maternity policies – it should however be noticed that some fundamental issues still remain unresolved and continue to pose problems. Many studies highlight the need for a more deepened approach to gender, family and work relationship. As we saw, in recent years great attention has been given to family well-being effects in workplace and to community studies. These push forward in order to consider the possibility to involve more social subjects in the redefinition of social policies facilitating work-family balance.

Let us briefly investigate them.

a) Individual (subject) vs. relational (network)

Firstly, it should be noticed that gender relationships in the labour market and within the family – expressed through the gender division of roles and responsibilities – have produced different family models in terms of income and occupation. Most countries show a tendency towards a dominant family model (dual earner family), which present some interesting differences related to the different cultural frameworks where family-friendly provisions are issued.

The tendency towards individualisation is a sort of cultural “super dimension” inspiring the design of social policies; it also underpins the workfare approach and it informs policies addressing single
subjects (women, men, children, and the elderly) who, according to the urgency of the hour, are targeted as the beneficiaries of actions.

The drift towards the individualisation of the social sphere is an additional reason to detect where empathic, care, equality and relational behaviour develops or can be developed in the light of sexual difference. No subject is neutral: gender is not only a sociological variable: it becomes a relational concept, where relationality is not understood as a mere structural element of feminist psychology, but also as an exploratory approach opposed to the one underpinning public/private, and production/reproduction dichotomies: relationality is perceived as a convention of feminist thought.

Being involved in relationships with others is the precondition of individual responsibility. But when and how should people be responsible? How can feelings of responsibility develop in a market which causes a fragmentation of time, space and distance between individuals? In this market, is there room for individual choice? In which case, are people willing to undertake the risk connected to it?

On the one hand, this risk is presumably avoided through a greater legal regulation of social relationships, whereby the law is called upon to regulate relationships. On the other hand, women know that excessive regulation contributed to institutional control over their lives and bodies, which deprived them of their own sex and embedded it in an imaginary and dangerous neutrality. Social interaction underlies responsible behaviour, which we do not consider as a component of the ethics of care but, on the contrary, as a behaviour informed by relationality, which presumes a voluntary participation in building social relations or producing rules regulating relationships. This notion of responsibility is a concept that should be implemented in sociological analysis. For this reason, a particular attention was given to the idea of care, that is taking care of others and taking in serious consideration other people’s welfare (Heimer

The lack of attention towards family welfare results in a tendency to consider family policies as provisions to be addressed always and exclusively to individuals and not to the relationships between them. This inattentiveness is all the more significant in work-family measures: is it possible to envisage work-family reconciliation policies targeting individuals (women, men, and children) and, at the same time, safeguard relationships?

Hence, an individualistic approach prevails. Although Equal Opportunities commission also advance claims on behalf of families, demands and perspectives are basically of an individualistic nature. Actions are driven by circumstantial considerations and they are aimed at the provision of particularised material services rather than at the production of relational goods. Evidently, it becomes necessary to combine workers’ and employers’ interests for the sake of mutual utility. However, mutual utility is construed in a strictly material sense, where no consideration is paid to the importance of an atmosphere of mutual trust and cooperation (Donati 2005b, 14-15).

Consequently, it is important to redefine the issue of work-family reconciliation: the work-family balance must be focused on and translated in terms of citizenship. Relational citizenship, in itself and for itself, implies that:

- “people’s rights must be understood in a relational way; they should not be constructed according to an individualistic perspective but, on the contrary, they should be perceived in terms of relationships;
- the satisfaction of requirements and needs should not be construed following a utilitarian approach, but, on the contrary, it must meet existence needs;
- workplace practice should not be *gender neutral*: on the
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contrary, it should value and ensure respect for gender differences. Differentiating practice on the basis of gender differences means pursuing reciprocity between sexes and having due regard of the different production modes of males and females” (Donati 2005b, 18).

Relational differentiation, however, should not be understood as synonymous of a lesser or less advanced functional differentiation; it does not imply a de-differentiation of the work-family relationship; on the contrary, it is a multi-stranded approach: it is a differentiation made according to the very distinctive features of relationships.

Inevitably, as a result of the shift from a functional differentiation (Lib-Lab) system to one based on relational differentiation (societal), actors and forms of governance change. Although the former model (Lib-Lab) is characterised by indisputably important measures (prescriptive, negotiation, and birth incentive policies), it should be noticed that it has a serious limitation, being the result of a compromise between the State and the market, excluding the family. The guiding principle should not be “work at all costs and then take care of the family” but, on the contrary, “ensure that work could add to (be subsidiary to) the family just like the family should add to (be subsidiary to) employment” (Donati 2005b, 21). This approach is being adopted by companies that have embraced a subsidiarity model, which implies the introduction of the “family time” element in work contracts. After all, this is what the new economy is about: a range of diversified work activities as opposed to standardised jobs regulated by collective agreements, as it used to be in the Fordist era.

b) Gender vs. family

Secondly, the trade-off between gender equality and family policies is engendering a sort of competition in individual life paths
between women’s aspirations and the creation of a family.

The problem has become feminised: though it is now evident that work-family reconciliation issues concern both men and women, in practice, these questions are considered mostly in terms of women’s responsibilities; alternatively, they only address women rather than gender difference (Lewis 2003; Kimmel 2000).

There is a need for recognition that inequality between women and men is a relational issue and that inequalities are not going to be resolved through a focus only on women.

‘Gender’ is often used as shorthand for ‘women’. Most development practitioners direct the bulk of their ‘gender mainstreaming’ efforts toward activities that aim to empower women economically and politically, protect their rights, and increase their representation in all manner of decision-making bodies. But gender isn’t just about women. Gender refers to socially constructed roles of both women and men as well as the relationships between them in a given society at a specific time and place. Yet where are men in the discourse on gender, family and work?

A feminised gender construction still prevails. Only few actions are developed in consideration of a work-family balance; most policy interventions still reflect the construction of these questions as women’s issues.

Gender difference is therefore overcome by a gender neutral approach, where the neutralisation of differences between men and women (differentiated universalism) – though inspired by the positive principle of doing away with inequalities – might eventually prove to be a very doubtful advantage: when gender relations are considered solely in terms of equality/inequality, there is a danger to lose sight of or remove attention from the original, positive difference underlying gender relations. This results in a neutralistic attitude, where the actual value of gender difference is removed from political
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and cultural discourse. To solve or prevent inequalities, you null differences.

More attention needed to be brought to the relations between women and men, particularly with regard to the division of labour, access to and control over resources, and potential for decision-making. There was increased understanding of the importance of seeking out male allies and in working with men to jointly redefine gender roles and relations. Thus there was a need to move away from ‘women’ as a target group, to gender equality as a development goal.

Consequently, scholars and policy makers stress that equal opportunities schemes should not be addressed exclusively or almost exclusively to women since, in spite of their undeniable usefulness, they might reinforce the traditional separation of life spheres between genders and consequently strengthen gender stereotypes. These measures should address men too and meet needs that several studies show to be growing, at least among younger male generations (Donati 2005b).

In fact, not only do they demand greater male commitment to the family, which would be wholly justifiable; they also implicitly advocate the full exchangeability of gender roles, which, on the contrary, appears inappropriate: in fact, male opposition is not only indicative of men’s cultural backwardness; it also reveals a different way of perceiving and experiencing the family.

Realistically, the question is how to promote a cultural change – without necessarily imposing it by law – and get men increasingly involved in childcare and “household” tasks: in fact, the model whereby men are the breadwinners and women look after the family and the home still seems to be the unspoken rule. It clearly appears that if the subjects themselves are not able to develop a shared life plan, work-family reconciliation cannot possibly be achieved since,
to a certain extent, this also calls for a culture change. In all countries, irrespective of their degree of gender equality, it appears difficult and sometimes even unthinkable to implement family-friendly policies – and especially legislation on parental leave – unless a real culture change is brought about. A major cultural problem still underlies hierarchical relationships between men and women and, to some extent, work relationships too. The culture change towards men’s involvement in household tasks is rather slow, though it is showing some positive signals.

The real objective of European policies is not to achieve parity and equality in a strictly statistical sense, but to promote mutual change through the permanent development of social and personal relationships. Gender equality means an equal visibility, empowerment and participation of both sexes in all spheres of public and private life. But, gender equality is the opposite of gender inequality, not of gender difference.

Hence, the principle of equal opportunities does not only concern women, but men and women alike as subjects who should contribute to the detection of their respective specificities and ensuing responsibilities in a positive way. The ultimate goal, however, remains a profound institutional, social and labour change, where parity could easily be accomplished in a new cultural context.

At a European level, family policies seem to be oriented towards childcare policies or lone parents policies, which are, probably not coincidentally, the fields where there are greater calls for policies and interventions to tackle new poverty. Moreover, as a result of the reconciliation between work and family, family policies are currently being replaced by gender equality policies (Bould 2006).

Such framework – equal opportunities on the one hand and female emancipation on the other, in a competitive and little-regulated market – seems to lead to a potential contraposition, or trade-off,
between equal opportunity and family (or family-friendly) policies. In this regard, an interesting paradox should be noticed: although in the countries considered in this work the family is seen as the key element of family-friendly measures, in actual fact, it appears that the two pillars of the current European strategy to promote work-family balance (equal opportunities and full female employment) might actually destroy the family, which is exactly what they intend to protect.

Instead of focusing on the family and on the welfare of the individual within family relationships, in order to compete in both European and global markets, greater emphasis is placed on equal opportunities and the possibility of self-determination as individuals in the labour market. This trade-off is not a desirable integration of the two dimensions; on the contrary, it produces a sort of schizophrenia, which becomes apparent in the difficult management of the times of everyday life or in the dissatisfaction with one’s way of life.

Furthermore, this choice, embedded in a culture of individualisation, considers family welfare as irrelevant and secondary to the wellbeing of women, children, and lone mothers: it thus appears to favour individual wellbeing to the detriment of a collective subject like the family and its potential for the whole society (Donati 2003a).

According to Prandini (2006), following a multidimensional and multi-layered process of growing social and political convergence, Europe is developing an active welfare state characterised by mother-friendly policies. This selective blend of liberal and social democratic principles has produced a social-liberal (Lib/lab) welfare model (Donati 2005a), which adopts an ambiguous and contradictory approach towards the family. This new “system” has some ironical consequences; it produces individualisation, the erosion of social networks and the contracting, the marketing and the de-socialisation of citizenship, and other things which are the very occurrences that
it is supposed to “make right”. Family is shoved to the background and concealed, exactly when its presence is needed the most. This results in a highly critical social situation (Donati 2003a; Prandini 2006) which is characterised, on the one hand, by openness and new individual freedoms and, on the other, by increasingly pervasive control. In order to break this downward spiral, it is necessary to review the very foundations of family welfare and re-think it in a pluralistic and societal perspective.

It is important to emphasise that equal opportunities policies have been interpreted as “facilitating an equal chance of securing employment in addition to determining one’s equal chances in securing social welfare benefits” (Drew, Emerek and Mahon 1998, 158). Equal opportunities in the workplace, citizenship rights and social welfare policies are all intertwined. It is therefore vital to examine the concept of equal opportunities understood as equality in conditions conducive to access to and participation in the labour force in a comparative perspective. State policy can be more or less mother friendly.

c) Individualisation vs. responsibility

A key element for establishing the structure and the outcome of family-friendly measures is the supposed and the actual relationship between families and, on the other hand, the labour market and the State.

The dominant approach in Europe nowadays is “utilitarian/productivist, and work-oriented. Although in principle Equal Opportunities commissions refuse to deal with work-family reconciliation issues on utilitarian grounds, and especially for the sake of greater work efficiency, in practice, on the contrary, they consider equal opportunities as a means to make the whole system
increasingly productive and competitive. The notion whereby work eradicates poverty, which is certainly true on a sociological level, should be used with caution when dealing with situations like lone mothers with children or family situations incompatible with employment. Furthermore, women who choose to devote their time entirely to their family should be protected and respected; in Europe, only France and Germany seem to show some concern for this issue. The corporate perspective prevails. The variety of issues and situations addressed by the best practices analysed in this study is wide: as described above, they range from vocational training to counselling, from the redefinition of organisational models to the rescheduling of working times. Workfare strategies are definitely the norm. They are for the most part corporate measures (which were adopted in a corporate perspective) with little or no coordination with families and with entire local service networks” (Donati 2005b).

Therefore, the underlying, workfare notion that seems to prevail is that the family and the time allocated to it should anyway be subsidiary to work; the opposite case is not acceptable, since it goes against Europe’s most extreme versions of free competition.

Finally it should be noted that there is a persistent difficulty in making the labour market share some responsibility in the pursuit of effective family-friendly policies.

Work-family conflict stems from a process of functional differentiation, which started in the modern era. This process, which reached its climax with the individualisation of work and family life, eventually led to the decline of this very type of differentiation and brought about a new form of social differentiation between the two areas of life. Nowadays, in order to reduce conflict, new synergies are being developed with the aim of bringing family and work together in a less alienating and estranging way. Generally, the strategies produced so far have been of a political and administrative nature
(at central and local levels) or, to a lesser extent, of a market nature (employers’ offer). Families and third sector organisations have been considered solely as actors needing assistance and benefits. Consequently, work-family reconciliation has been considered predominantly as a matter of “increasing women’s participation in the formal labour market and demanding more strength for women when competing with men on the success ladder” (Donati 2005b, 18). Relational policies, on the contrary, are based upon concepts of reciprocity in relationships and cultural identity; they therefore involve a number of different actors, such as political institutions, companies, the private non-profit sector and families (Donati 2005a). The issues concerning the relationship between work and family are surely complex and multidimensional: “striking a balance therefore means enabling multiple strategies that could reflect a more satisfactory way of living” (Donati 2005a, 76).

Recently, work-family scholars and practitioners have suggested that our understanding of the work, community and family domains would be also enriched by incorporating community into the analysis of work and family. In response, beginning steps have been taken in this direction. Voydanoff (2001) provides a framework for integrating community into the analysis of work and family. It reviews existing research on two types of mesosystem connections among work, community and family: (i) direct relationships, in which characteristics of one or more microsystems are associated with characteristics of another microsystem; and (ii) the combined effects of two or more microsystems, that is, the work-family, work-community, community-family and work-community-family interfaces, on various outcomes. The article reveals important gaps in our knowledge and provides suggestions for future work that can lead to an integration of community into work and family research.

Also Rayman and Bookman (1999) review existing work, family,
and community research and public policy in terms of prevailing strengths and deficiencies and then set forth possibilities for a future agenda. In the last decades, there has been considerable effort from researchers and public policymakers to set an agenda for the United States on work, family, and community issues. There has been movement in both research and public policy to connect work and family perspectives, and, more recently, community contexts have been recognized as well. However, current research and public policy models have been limited by a number of deficiencies that prevent them from developing and implementing an agenda that has the capacity to move our nation forward to meet the challenges that lie ahead. In addition, there is little direct connection between the findings from current research and the content of new public policies.

The fundamental principle that could convey the spirit of the new society most effectively is subsidiarity (Donati and Colozzi 2005), which should not be separated from solidarity. In the broader sense of the word, this principle states that “the action of each subject, whoever he or she may be, must be subsidiary to other individuals not simply by helping them in case of need, (as implied in the etymological meaning of “subsidy”), but also because by helping them, he/she respects and promotes them in their dignity and autonomous responsibility” (Donati 1999, 70).

The principle of subsidiarity rediscover the connection between the freedom and, on the other hand, the responsibility of each (individual and collective) subject within an overall framework where each person – in their own sphere of action – contributes to the common good by collaborating to the design and the realisation of effective and innovative social policies; these policies, in their turn, should no longer be focused on specific groups or individuals but they should be inspired by the same relational principles informing civil society. Such are subsidiarity strategies. They define and deal
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with work/life reconciliation through work-family enhancement and they consider work as subsidiary to family – or rather they value work, wherever it might be, provided it is humane. The State is considered as subsidiary to civil society (a combination made of companies, families and the non-profit sector); consequently, the State only steps in to define family-friendly measures only where this is necessary and useful to promote work-family balance. The objective is a community-based welfare system, to be achieved through the promotion of a good work-family balance; this synergy is realised within a community framework and the success of this approach is measured by the welfare of the community. Work-family balance, according to subsidiarity, should be inherently satisfying; it is a good in itself, which is generated by means of a relational framework. The framework illustrated above represents an ideal model that should inspire social policies and reconciliation tools in order to promote apparently scarcely reconcilable or even conflicting rights in a harmonic way.

This new perspective overcomes the Lib-Lab idea of the welfare state and focuses on three key elements. Firstly, it builds welfare around the subjects involved, who become makers and receivers at the same time. This notion has a clear bearing on the design and the implementation of social policies, which are no longer imposed upon citizens but, on the contrary, are the expression of their own needs. Secondly, the State takes its original political role as guardian of the common good: it becomes the maker of general rules, not the “producer” of civil society or a power system that “(in its view, understanding and practice) considers civil society as a means to political hegemony” (Donati 1999, 66). Lastly, the notion of an all-inclusive institutional structure gives way to the promotion of competitive solidarity between various different groups.

As mentioned above, this new system, among other things, creates
a proliferation of sites and places for developing civil relationships. Civil society thus becomes a collection of places for communication and dialogue where subjects meet, exchange opinions and make plans for the future. The family, school, and community agencies become the basic institutions of this society, where human identity is shaped by means of interpersonal communication. These places are and will be the site where the challenge of welfare and, consequently, of social policies will lie.

Work-family reconciliation should result from a common recognition and taking of responsibility on the part of the various spheres of society: the family, work, the State and civil society. Existing work-family policies, on the contrary, seem to find a great obstacle – which is undoubtedly mainly culture-related – in the resistance of the labour market to view itself as being accessory and related to the family and to acknowledge family-friendly policies as a way to resolve not only individual but also relational conflicts. Therefore, the challenge ahead is for policies to find a way to make all subjects truly participate and share responsibilities.

**Summing up...**

Gender mainstreaming process and strategy and gender equality principle seems to become the core of every policy related to reconciliation policies, family policies and even employment ones. Given a so strong cultural and symbolic orientation seems always more and more difficult make progress about relational aspects of individuals’ life. In this sense gender policies, that emphasise the importance of dialogue, practice and negotiation in the relationship among men and women/work and family/ individuals and institutions, fail in catching the specific relationality of this process. The lack of attention towards family welfare results in a tendency to consider
family policies as provisions to be addressed always and exclusively to individuals and not to the relationships between them.

The risk of underestimate the importance of family relationship is high and growing. This inattentiveness is all the more significant in work-family measures: is it possible to envisage work-family reconciliation policies targeting individuals (women, men, and children) and, at the same time, safeguard relationships?

Within this framework, the introduction of new tools and approaches addressing the changes in family life and its organisation, but also in workplaces can enhance the understanding of this phenomenon and the design of social policies, both in terms of equal opportunities and for the development of gender mainstreaming, respecting the multidimensional and relational life of individuals.

The new challenge seems to be the need to reconcile gender, family and work not only through policies but in their basic meaning for individual life; people experiences different spheres of life as an intertwined process, not artificially separable.

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Gender mainstreaming was established as a major global strategy for the promotion of gender equality in the Beijing Platform for Action from the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Also Europe has been focusing increasing attention on gender issues, and especially on considerations on the female condition. After 10 years (and something), the evaluation of equal opportunities mainly focuses on qualification measures for unemployed women and improvements for childcare facilities, the consideration of gender mainstreaming in other policy areas as well as macro economic effects on employment and unemployment of women. Recent developments in European countries are that more and more women are joining the labour force, birth rates are declining and social policies are mainly orienting their measures towards gender equality. Whereas previously the countries with the highest period fertility rates were those in which family-oriented cultural traditions were most pronounced and in which women’s labour market participation was least, these relationships are now wholly reversed. These problems, set within a European framework of public spending cuts, make it difficult to maintain and sustain the current type of welfare state. This book focuses on the relation between family and gender mainstreaming to stress, if and how, the debate on the topic of reconciliation policies, family policies and gender issues are implemented in the European social policy systems. Each author addresses this issue in their own terms; thanks to their original approach, it is possible appreciate a variety of aspects, which intertwine in different ways but which all contribute to simplify the multidimensional framework of the relationship between gender, family and work in the European arena.

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