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## Third European Quality of Life Survey – Quality of Life in Europe: Families in the Economic Crisis

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## Third European Quality of Life Survey – Quality of Life in Europe: Families in the Economic Crisis

### Abstract

[Excerpt] The European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) provides a reliable picture of the living conditions and the social situation of Europeans before and during the economic crisis. But how has the crisis affected families with children? Children are more at risk of poverty or social exclusion than the overall population in a majority of countries; hence, it is important to understand how the crisis has affected households with children. This report describes the changing quality of life across the EU for different types of families with children and compares their living standards and social situation. Families are divided into two main groups:

- lone-parent families, working or not, and living alone or with relatives;
- couples with children, both dual and single earners, and again, living as a family unit or with other relatives.

Potential patterns that may be related to different family policy approaches are identified by looking at differences between four groups of countries, classified on a spectrum from those with the most flexible family policies to those with the most traditional policies.

### Keywords

Europe, quality of life, child welfare, poverty, family policy

### Comments

#### Suggested Citation

Sándor, E., Ahrendy, D., & Kuenzi, R. (2013). *Third European Quality of Life Survey – Quality of life in Europe: Families in the economic crisis*. Luxembourg: Author.



Quality of life  
in Europe:  
**Families in  
the economic  
crisis**



# 3<sup>rd</sup>

European  
Quality  
of Life  
Survey



Quality of life  
in Europe:  
Families in  
the economic crisis

# 3<sup>rd</sup> European Quality of Life Survey

When citing this report, please use the following wording:  
Eurofound (2014), *Third European Quality of Life Survey – Quality of life in Europe: Families in the economic crisis*,  
Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

**Authors:** Eszter Sándor, Daphne Ahrendt and Rachel Kuenzi (Eurofound)  
**Peer reviewers:** Orsolya Lelkes (European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research), Matt Barnes (NatCen Social Research)  
**Eurofound project:** Third European Quality of Life Survey

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Cataloguing data can be found at the end of this publication.

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2014

ISBN 978-92-897-1138-8

doi:10.2806/49619

*Printed in Luxembourg*

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## Country codes

AT	Austria	IE	Ireland
BE	Belgium	IT	Italy
BG	Bulgaria	LT	Lithuania
CY	Cyprus	LU	Luxembourg
CZ	Czech Republic	LV	Latvia
DE	Germany	MT	Malta
DK	Denmark	NL	Netherlands
EE	Estonia	PL	Poland
EL	Greece	PT	Portugal
ES	Spain	RO	Romania
FI	Finland	SE	Sweden
FR	France	SI	Slovenia
HR	Croatia	SK	Slovakia
HU	Hungary	UK	United Kingdom



# Executive summary

## Introduction

The European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) provides a reliable picture of the living conditions and the social situation of Europeans before and during the economic crisis. But how has the crisis affected families with children? Children are more at risk of poverty or social exclusion than the overall population in a majority of countries; hence, it is important to understand how the crisis has affected households with children. This report describes the changing quality of life across the EU for different types of families with children and compares their living standards and social situation. Families are divided into two main groups:

- lone-parent families, working or not, and living alone or with relatives;
- couples with children, both dual and single earners, and again, living as a family unit or with other relatives.

Potential patterns that may be related to different family policy approaches are identified by looking at differences between four groups of countries, classified on a spectrum from those with the most flexible family policies to those with the most traditional policies.

## Policy context

The economic crisis has led to a deterioration of living and working conditions in many Member States and has increased inequalities between countries and groups of people. Those already vulnerable are at increased risk of poverty and social exclusion. Growing inequality is also apparent between families: whether a child lives in poverty depends, in part, on the type of family in which it grows up. It is against this background that the EU's Social Investment Package calls for Member States to focus on simple, targeted and conditional social investment. The aim of this report is to help policymakers identify the types of families with children that need to be targeted.

## Key findings

- Most lone parents work, mostly full-time. The proportion of working lone parents has changed little since 2007 in the EU28 overall, but in the most 'traditional' group of countries, the proportion of working lone parents has decreased. Many of these countries have been substantially affected by the crisis, which may explain the increase in jobless lone parents.
- Lone parents living with relatives were more likely to be unemployed in 2011 than in 2007. This may reflect a structural change in families: lone parents who lost their jobs may have had to move in with their families.
- Families in jobless households are those most likely to find it difficult to make ends meet, and are also more likely to face economic difficulties now than in 2007. Jobless lone parents are facing difficulties everywhere, but more often in the most traditional and in the partially traditional countries, their proportion having doubled in the latter group since 2007.
- Dual-earner families are the least likely to have financial difficulties, and there has been no significant worsening for this group since the crisis. More families had difficulties paying for accommodation and for utility bills in 2011 than in 2007. Jobless families are most at risk of debt.
- The rate of jobless families facing a high level of deprivation has increased significantly since 2007. While the most 'flexible' countries have the lowest average levels of deprivation, families who are out of work in these countries still face high levels, despite the adequate benefits that characterise these countries.
- Lone mothers, whether working full time or part time, work fewer hours than lone fathers or men in dual- or single-earner couples. Lone mothers are also more likely to feel that their job is insecure than lone fathers who are, in turn, working more hours in 2011 than in 2007.
- Most lone mothers, and mothers who are part of a couple, would like to work if they could choose their working hours, with over 50% of economically inactive mothers preferring to

work part time. While most mothers in full-time work would prefer to work less, most single mothers working part time would like to increase their hours.

- The conflict of work and family life has increased in all types of households with children. Lone parents working full time experience work–life conflict most often.
- Employment plays an important role in parents' subjective well-being. Lone parents who are not working have the lowest life satisfaction and are the least happy.
- While life satisfaction and happiness have not changed significantly overall since 2007, parents in jobless households have felt a decrease in both, jobless lone parents in the most flexible countries experiencing the greatest decrease.
- For couples with only one earner, in the most traditional group of countries the earning partner enjoys greater life satisfaction and happiness than the stay-at-home partner, while in the most flexible group the latter has greater subjective well-being. In the mixed-flexible group and in the mixed-traditional group little difference is found.
- Having a job is important for the mental well-being of lone parents in all country groups. This is true even in countries where generous benefits are provided for jobless parents and where staying at home is often voluntary. Lone parents who are not working have lower mental well-being in the most flexible countries than elsewhere.
- Parents in the mainly traditional countries experience greater social exclusion than elsewhere, but jobless parents have the greatest exclusion everywhere. For jobless lone parents, social exclusion is greatest in the most flexible countries.
- Lone parents living with relatives feel a high degree of social exclusion despite living with others.
- Lone parents remain less satisfied with their life than others, when income is controlled for: hence, while income and employment status are important for their subjective well-being, other (social) factors matter too. Importantly, the reduced life satisfaction of lone parents living with their extended family remains, suggesting that while family may

provide some protection in terms of income, this is not enough to improve subjective well-being.

- The lower levels of life satisfaction experienced by grandparents who live with their children's families disappear after income is controlled for, suggesting that the family structure provides support for older people as long as this living arrangement is voluntary, rather than a necessity due to lower income.

## Policy pointers

- Targeted actions are needed to help lone parents into work since, even in the most flexible countries with their adequate level of benefits, families in which nobody works face high levels of deprivation.
- Getting people who have been recently made redundant back into work as soon as possible must be a policy priority to avoid the risk of disadvantage becoming entrenched.
- Flexible working hours should be made more widely available: over 50% of inactive mothers would like to work part time, and most mothers in full-time work would prefer to work less.
- Going to work should mean that both parents are financially better off; this entails such issues as assistance with childcare costs.
- Boosting social cohesion, social integration and social cooperation should be high on the policy agenda: these factors critically influence how individuals are affected by the new social risks, and how individuals, their communities and countries achieve economic prosperity.
- Measures are needed to help families combine work and care commitments, through an integrated system of leave, care and workplace support for parents of young children.
- Parental-leave systems are needed to encourage more fathers to take and share leave, and to facilitate their engagement with domestic responsibilities.

# Introduction

Every day new figures and narratives provide further evidence of the extent to which the financial and economic crisis is adversely affecting life in the European Union. The 2013 edition of Eurostat's Social Statistics shows that, in 2011, there were 119.6 million people in the European Union<sup>1</sup> – or 24.2% of the population – living in households facing poverty or social exclusion.<sup>2</sup> This figure was up from the 115.7 million such people in 2008 when the financial crisis erupted into a full-blown economic crisis. The impact of the crisis started to become apparent in 2010, as the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion had declined between 2005 and 2009. In 2010 and 2011 the average unemployment rate in the European Union was 9.7%. By January 2013 the figure had risen to 10.8% (Eurostat, 2013a).

As the Europe 2020 strategy underlines, 'the crisis has wiped out years of economic and social progress' and has led to a marked increase in the numbers of deprived and disadvantaged people across the EU (European Commission, 2010). Furthermore, the crisis has 'disproportionately hit those who were already vulnerable' (European Commission, 2011) and the EU averages presented above mask considerable variations both between Member States and different subgroups of the population. Research shows that, in many countries, the crisis has caused more damage to workers on temporary contracts and young people (Vaughan-Whitehead, 2012).

What the crisis has done to the quality of life in Europe has been the subject of investigation in the overview report for Eurofound's third European Quality of Life Survey (Eurofound, 2012). This report is one of a series of more in-depth reports that address such issues as subjective well-being, social inequalities, quality of society and public services, and trends in quality of life (Eurofound, 2013b–e).

These reports all highlight how the economic crisis has impaired the quality of life for many Europeans. An overview of some of the most striking findings also shows the implications of this.

- The economic crisis has seen social inequalities increase in Europe. The position of subgroups that were already disadvantaged in 2007 has deteriorated at a faster-than-average

rate. People in the lowest-income quartile and the unemployed (especially long-term unemployed) and people unable to work have been hit hardest. In central and eastern Europe, older people appear to have been particularly affected.

- In many countries, the proportion of people in the lowest income quartile having difficulty making ends meet has gradually increased. At the same time, people in the top income quartiles in southern Europe – with the exception of Greece – have seen their well-being rise, pointing to increasing inequality in these countries.
- Falling levels of well-being are also reported among those aged 18–24 and those aged 50–64; this could mean that these two groups are being squeezed out of the labour market. The severe adverse effects of the crisis on young adults are not limited to employment and income but also extend into other critical areas of life, with far-reaching impacts on sociopsychological stress and mental health.
- Since 2007, the proportion of people having difficulties making ends meet has increased in almost every EU country, and the average number of items people cannot afford also went up.
- Workers are also suffering from the pressure of the crisis. The long duration of the economic downturn might result in an increase in mental health problems. This seems to be an important argument for paying more attention to the reconciliation of work–life balance.
- On average, social exclusion in the European Union increased from 10% to 12% between 2007 and 2011, but much larger increases were found in Cyprus (14 percentage points) and Greece (6 percentage points).<sup>3</sup>
- Across Europe, trust in public institutions visibly decreased between 2007 and 2011 – more so in those countries hardest hit by the crisis. In some Member States, tension reported between racial and ethnic groups has increased.

Finally, this brief scan of existing EQLS analyses shows that the financial and economic crisis has also resulted in cuts in public expenditure on healthcare as well as increasing demand for public healthcare service provision.

<sup>1</sup> The Eurostat figures presented in this paragraph are averages for the EU27.

<sup>2</sup> See the European Commission's Europe 2020 headline target of poverty and social exclusion at [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/targets/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/targets/index_en.htm).

<sup>3</sup> In the EQLS, social exclusion is measured using an index constructed on the basis of four items. The results are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

All this highlights how the measurement of the various aspects of quality of life becomes of even greater relevance in periods of rapid social and economic change, and in times of growing social inequality.<sup>4</sup> Measures of quality of life can provide additional information about who is doing well or badly in life, with subjective well-being indicators particularly useful when deciding how to allocate or prioritise scarce

resources (Dolan and Metcalfe, 2012). The information from the quality of life indicators can clearly help in monitoring and mapping the experiences of people in different social groups and, as Dolan and Metcalfe also emphasise, such information can also contribute to informing policy design and policy appraisal.

## Families in the economic crisis – current EU policy context

Since 2010, the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion has been one of seven flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth. It is designed to help EU countries reach the headline target of lifting 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion.

Three Council Presidencies (Belgium in 2010, Hungary in 2011, and Cyprus in 2012) commissioned studies and convened conferences on child poverty.

The Employment and Social Affairs Council adopted recommendations on child poverty in 2011 and 2012.

In 2007 and 2011 respectively, the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee adopted Opinions to tackle child poverty.

In 2012, the Social Protection Committee (comprising representatives of Member States and the Commission) endorsed the European Commission's intention to adopt a Recommendation on Child Poverty.

The European Parliament adopted resolutions addressing child poverty (2008/2034 (INI) on promoting inclusion and combating poverty and 2011/2052 (INI) on the European Platform against poverty and social exclusion).

On 20 February, 2013, the European Commission adopted a Recommendation entitled *Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage* (European Commission, 2013).

## Aim and objectives of study

The main aim of this report is to describe the quality of life of different types of families with children across the EU during the economic crisis, and to assess how this has changed since 2007, just before the financial crisis led to the economic downturn that Europe is experiencing. Using data from the EQLS, the study has four main objectives.

- It compares living standards and quality-of-life ratings of four types of European families with children. The quality-of-life ratings will focus on a range of domains, such as the work–life balance of European families, their subjective well-being, social exclusion, access and affordability of childcare, and housing insecurity.
- It identifies and describes significant shifts in these scores since 2007 to see to what extent the economic crisis may be affecting these families.

- It looks at differences between groups of countries in order to identify potential patterns that may be related to varying levels of support for families, and other differences in policies aimed at families.
- It examines how the situation of families with children across the EU differs, depending on different employment situations.

It is hoped that the information presented in this report will help policymakers identify the types of European families with children that need particular attention. To this end, a series of policy pointers are included at the end of the report. As a next step in Eurofound's research on families in the economic crisis, the question of how service provision to these families has changed in response to the crisis will be examined in 2014. The project will map the kinds of policy responses that may play a role in helping disadvantaged families in 10 selected countries, and will analyse them with the aim of helping policymakers find effective solutions for a variety of situations across countries.

<sup>4</sup> Quality of life relates to the overall well-being of individuals. It covers living conditions but also how people respond to, and feel about, their situation. The EQLS sets out 12 aspects of quality of life. This report focuses on those of particular importance to families with children.

## Families with children in the economic crisis

In this analysis of the findings of the EQLS, the focus of the investigation shifts from the European population in general to European families with children. As more research evidence is published, it becomes evident that certain types of families are disproportionately shouldering the burden of the crisis. Although middle-income families with children are adversely affected by the crisis, those with the lowest incomes seem to be hardest hit, as are large families and lone parents (Browne, 2012; Gauthier, 2010).

Using the 'Foresight Approach',<sup>5</sup> researchers have analysed what challenges to families' well-being might arise in the future and what the key causes of these changes might be (Kapella et al, 2011). Below are some of the policy issues that were identified as being important in fostering family well-being.

**Intergenerational solidarity and communities:** these become crucial in countries with a weak welfare system. Societies where care and education are based only on community support were seen as being particularly vulnerable.

**Importance of sufficient time for families:** the well-being of families appears to be related to how much time they spend together and what activities they share.

**Unpaid work and care arrangements:** there is a clear need for recognition of the unpaid work (largely care work) performed within families and communities.

**Family transitions:** being able to adjust to the dynamic character of partnerships, childhood, parenthood and grandparenthood, as well as life-course transitions, is an essential part of family well-being.

**The individualisation of social rights:** this fosters social mobility, life choices and possibilities, and can improve the well-being of family members. At the same time, there is the risk that policies aimed only at the individual endanger family bonds and solidarity. There is therefore an argument that the family should be considered as a unit and not just as a sum of individuals.

**Family mainstreaming:** a framework is needed for all policies that cover the family, whether at local, national or European level. This approach would address the family as a unit, consider all family forms, include elderly members of the family and include a continuous measurement of family well-being.

These are suggestions for the long-term future (2035). But they are also useful in pointing out how important it is to study what the economic crisis is doing now to families' quality of life. This type of information shows policymakers where the focus should lie in trying to safeguard the future well-being of European families. Up to now, due to a lack of empirical data, it has been difficult to assess the impact of the crisis on families' quality of life (Gauthier, 2010).<sup>6</sup> The EQLS fills this gap.

## Conceptual framework

### The European Quality of Life Survey

The European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) is a tool established by Eurofound to monitor and analyse the multidimensional nature of quality of life in the EU. It was first used in 2003 and has since been repeated in 2007 and 2011, making it possible to examine trends.<sup>7</sup>

The EQLS is a cross-sectional survey of people aged 18 and over, resident in the EU for at least six months. In the 2011–2012 round, at least 1,000 interviews were completed in all Member States. In the seven largest Member States, in which 75% of the EU population live, larger samples were interviewed:

- at least 1,500 interviews in Romania and Spain;
- 2,250 in France, Italy, Poland and the UK;
- 3,000 in Germany.

The larger sample sizes help improve national estimates, as well as those for the EU overall. The EQLS is designed to provide an accurate picture of the contemporary social situation in the EU, giving an effective comparison of experiences and conditions between countries. While the national samples provide a representative picture for each country, they are often too small for a detailed analysis of particular subgroups, such as single-parent families within a particular country. Although some subgroup analyses will be presented at national level, comparisons between subgroups will mostly be made between four groups of similar countries.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> This adopts a creative technique to imagine possible futures for families (see Kapella et al, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> While this report presents analyses of the third EQLS on the situation of European families, the study will continue in 2014 with an examination of Member States' family policy responses to the crisis. These results will be published in early 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Fieldwork was carried out in early 2012 in Croatia, which joined the European Union on 1 July 2013, and six non-EU European countries, as part of a separate exercise but using the same sampling methodology and the same questionnaire.

<sup>8</sup> Country groupings have been developed specifically for this research. See 'Development of country groups'.



## Defining European families with children

As this report looks specifically at the social and financial situation of European families with children, it is important to define the different family forms that will be examined. The EQLS interviewed individuals aged 18 and over living in private households, and collected detailed information about the respondents' households. This makes it possible to identify various types of European families with children.

Using the following OECD definitions, this report distinguishes between lone-parent families and couple families – couples with children (OECD, 2011a):

- **Lone-parent families** are defined as having a lone parent living without a partner, with his/her children younger than 18, in the same dwelling.<sup>9</sup>
- **Couple families** are defined as families where the respondent lives with a partner and one or more children younger than 18 in the same dwelling.

All families where the respondent lives with a partner and children under the age of 18 in the same dwelling are defined as 'couple families'. The marital status of the respondent is not taken into consideration. Due to small sample sizes it is not possible to carry out separate analyses for same-sex couple families. The EQLS does not collect information about the household composition that would make it possible to identify

different kinds of couple families – such as reconstituted families, where new partnerships have formed bringing in children from previous relationships.

A second distinction is made between households with children where no other further adult relatives live in the household and those where they do. It is useful to look at these extended families to see whether their quality of life differs from other European families and whether the presence of other adult relatives in the household has an influence on people's well-being.

Table 1 below shows the total composition of households in the EQLS sample. The four types of families with children described above are marked in bold. It shows that, in total, families with children represent 23% of households in the European Union. This increases to 26% when dependent children are included.

As noted earlier, one of the objectives of this study is to examine the social and financial situation of European families with children across different employment situations. Therefore, lone-parent families and couple families are also subclassified according to the employment situation of household members and the distribution of work in the household. Table 2 shows the distribution of European families with children for these subcategories. The percentages represent the proportion of the total number of European families with children in the EQLS sample.

**Table 1: EQLS household composition, EU28**

Household type	Number	% of households
Single, living alone	9,600	26
Single, living with relatives in the household, but without a partner	3,900	11
<b>Lone parent, with (dependent) children</b>	1,300	4
<b>Lone parent with (dependent) children, living with relatives</b>	200	< 1
Couple, no dependent children in the household	12,500	34
Couple, no dependent children in the household, living with relatives	900	2
<b>Couple with (dependent) children</b>	7,600	21
<b>Couple with (dependent) children, living with relatives</b>	500	1
<b>Total sample (EU28)</b>	36,500	100

*Note:* In the categories with children, only those households where the child is the child/stepchild of the respondent are included in these tables. Data are unweighted.

Source: EQLS 2011

<sup>9</sup> Children older than 18 years, living in the household and who are still in education are treated as dependents. Annex 1 provides further details.



**Table 2: Employment situation by family type, EU28 (%)**

Lone parent with (dependent) children	
Lone parent, working	10
Lone parent, not working	4
Lone parent living with relatives (with or without job)	2
Couple with (dependent) children	
Couple, parents, both working	51
Couple, parents, one working	24
Couple, parents, neither working	4
Couple, family with other relatives, two earners	3
Couple, family with other relatives, one earner	2
Couple, family with other relatives, no earners	0

Note: N = 9,600  
Source: EQLS 2011

## Defining family policy

The vast amount of literature on family policy highlights the increased attention paid in recent years by researchers and policymakers to families. There are many reasons why the topic features so prominently on the agenda. A broad range of issues is relevant to family policy; the issues include the following:

- declining fertility and the ageing population;
- gender equality;
- the participation of women in the labour force;
- work–life balance;
- intergenerational solidarity;
- child well-being and child poverty;
- mobility.

Families have always formed the cornerstone of European societies, from the onset of the nation state to the development of the modern welfare state, and they still do. At the same time, family policies remain diverse across Europe, so that there is no standard definition as to what constitutes family policy (Gauthier, 2010; Lohmann, 2011). It has even been argued that scholars give different meanings to the various concepts used to distinguish different types of policies because terms such as ‘familialisation’ and ‘de-familialisation’ are simply too

ambiguous (Saxonberg, 2013).<sup>10</sup> The consequence of this diversity and broad scope is that assessments of family policy have tended to use many different approaches, ranging from using the whole family as the main unit of analysis to taking a mother-centred and/or father-centred perspective (Lohmann, 2011).

Aware of these deficiencies, scholars and policymakers are giving considerable attention to building a framework of cross-nationally comparable indicators on contexts, policy measures and outcomes, which will greatly facilitate the assessment and comparison of national family policies (Lohmann et al, 2009; Lohmann, 2011). Equally, the OECD’s Family Database greatly improves the availability of standardised data in the field of family policy (OECD, 2011a). Meanwhile, following the February 2013 adoption of the Recommendation, *Investing in Children - breaking the cycle of disadvantage* (European Commission, 2013) the European Platform for Investing in Children (EPIC) website was launched. The website sets out to ‘provide information about all policies that can help children and their families face up to the unprecedented challenges that exist in the current economic climate in Europe’ (EPIC website: <http://europa.eu/epic/>).

A recent study on the impact of the economic crisis on family policies in the European Union has identified the elements of family policy most commonly included in studies of family policies (Gauthier, 2010). This set of ‘common definitions’ is

<sup>10</sup> The concepts originated in response to criticism that the seminal ‘*Three worlds of welfare capitalism*’ typology (Esping-Andersen, 1990) neglected the family’s role. Esping-Andersen subsequently developed the terms ‘de-familialisation’ and ‘re-familialisation’ to refer to the degree to which welfare and caring responsibilities in a household are relaxed because of either welfare state provision or market provision, where the distinction between the two terms is ‘more a matter of degree than of an either/or’ (Esping-Andersen, 1999, p. 51).

particularly useful for this report. The main elements of family policies, as identified by Gauthier, are:

- child/family cash benefits (allowances) and tax relief for families with children;
- maternity and parental leave policies (including pregnancy benefits, maternity and paternity leave policies, and parental and childcare leave policies);
- childcare policies (including the provision of childcare and related subsidies for day care, kindergarten, pre- and after-school care, and early childhood education);
- housing benefits for families with children;
- support for families with caring responsibilities towards the elderly or other dependents;
- other policies or services for families with children.

The figures presented in Table 3, showing the distribution of three family policy indicators, give an impression of the large policy differences across the EU Member States.

**Table 3: Macro-indicators relating to family policy, EU28, 2011**

	Female employment rate (%)	Male employment rate (%)	Difference male–female (percentage points)	Children aged three years or under in childcare at least part time (%)	Family benefits as proportion of all benefits (%)
Austria	67	78	11	14	10
Belgium	57	67	10	39	8
Bulgaria	56	61	6	7	11
Croatia	47	58	11	15	8
Cyprus	62	74	12	23	10
Czech Republic	57	74	17	5	7
Denmark	70	76	5	74	12
Estonia	63	68	5	19	13
Finland	67	71	3	26	11
France	60	68	9	44	8
Germany	68	77	10	24	11
Greece	45	66	21	19	6
Hungary	51	61	11	8	13
Ireland	55	63	8	21	13
Italy	47	68	21	26	5
Latvia	60	62	1	15	8
Lithuania	60	60	0	7	12
Luxembourg	57	72	15	44	18
Malta	41	74	33	11	6
Netherlands	70	80	10	52	4
Poland	53	66	13	3	4
Portugal	60	68	8	35	6

	Female employment rate (%)	Male employment rate (%)	Difference male–female (percentage points)	Children aged three years or under in childcare at least part time (%)	Family benefits as proportion of all benefits (%)
Romania	52	65	13	2	10
Slovakia	53	66	14	4	10
Slovenia	61	68	7	37	9
Spain	52	63	11	39	6
Sweden	71	76	5	51	10
UK	65	75	10	35	7

Note: Red shading indicates lower values, green shading, higher.  
Source: Eurostat 2013, Croatian Bureau of Statistics 2012.

## Development of country groups

Considering the diversity in family policy, national variations must be taken into account when trying to analyse the social and financial situation of European families in the context of the economic crisis. However, EQLS sample sizes prevent sub-group analyses of different family forms from being carried out at country level; moreover, looking at 28 countries separately would not make this report particularly readable. For this reason the countries are grouped together.

Gauthier's research has guided the development of country groupings. It will come as little surprise that family policy typologies are often varied and sometimes criticised (Blum, 2011). Even prior to the 2004 enlargement of the European Union, different typologies had been constructed depending on the definition and the focus of the family policies. Following enlargement, they have become even more diverse.

There are several further arguments for developing a country typology specifically for the purpose of this study.

- None of the existing typologies covers all 28 EQLS countries.
- Following enlargement, the post-socialist countries have been either placed together or treated as several different groups without a clear consensus on the position of these countries.
- Recent shifts in family policy – largely in response to the economic crisis – mean that existing typologies, in some cases, no longer accurately reflect the situation.

Therefore, to understand better the differences between the four types of European families, a classification of country groups has been developed for this study. It is based on a deductive literature review whereby existing typologies provided the input on how to group the 28 Member States. A full description of the country grouping process can be found in Annex 2. The process resulted in four country groups; Table 4 describes the policy features that define each one.

**Table 4: Family-policy country groups**

<p><b>1. Most flexible</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- high female employment rate</li> <li>- high rate of part-time work</li> <li>- good childcare provision</li> <li>- generous leave and benefits</li> <li>- good work-life balance</li> </ul>	<p><b>2. Mixed, mainly flexible</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- medium or high female employment rate</li> <li>- good childcare options, or significant recent efforts to boost them</li> <li>- mix of traditional policies and flexible policies</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Mixed, mainly traditional</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- usually low female employment rate</li> <li>- low rate of part-time work</li> <li>- few children in childcare</li> <li>- long parental leave</li> </ul>	<p><b>4. Most traditional (family-orientated)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- few children in full-time childcare, low female employment rate, or relatives commonly look after children</li> <li>- support to large families</li> <li>- some significantly affected by crisis (Greece, Spain, Estonia, Lithuania)</li> </ul>

Using this classification, the Member States are grouped as follows:

- most flexible: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK;
- mixed, mainly flexible: Austria, Cyprus, Germany, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal and Slovenia;
- mixed, mainly traditional: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Romania and Slovakia;
- most traditional (family-orientated): Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Italy and Lithuania.

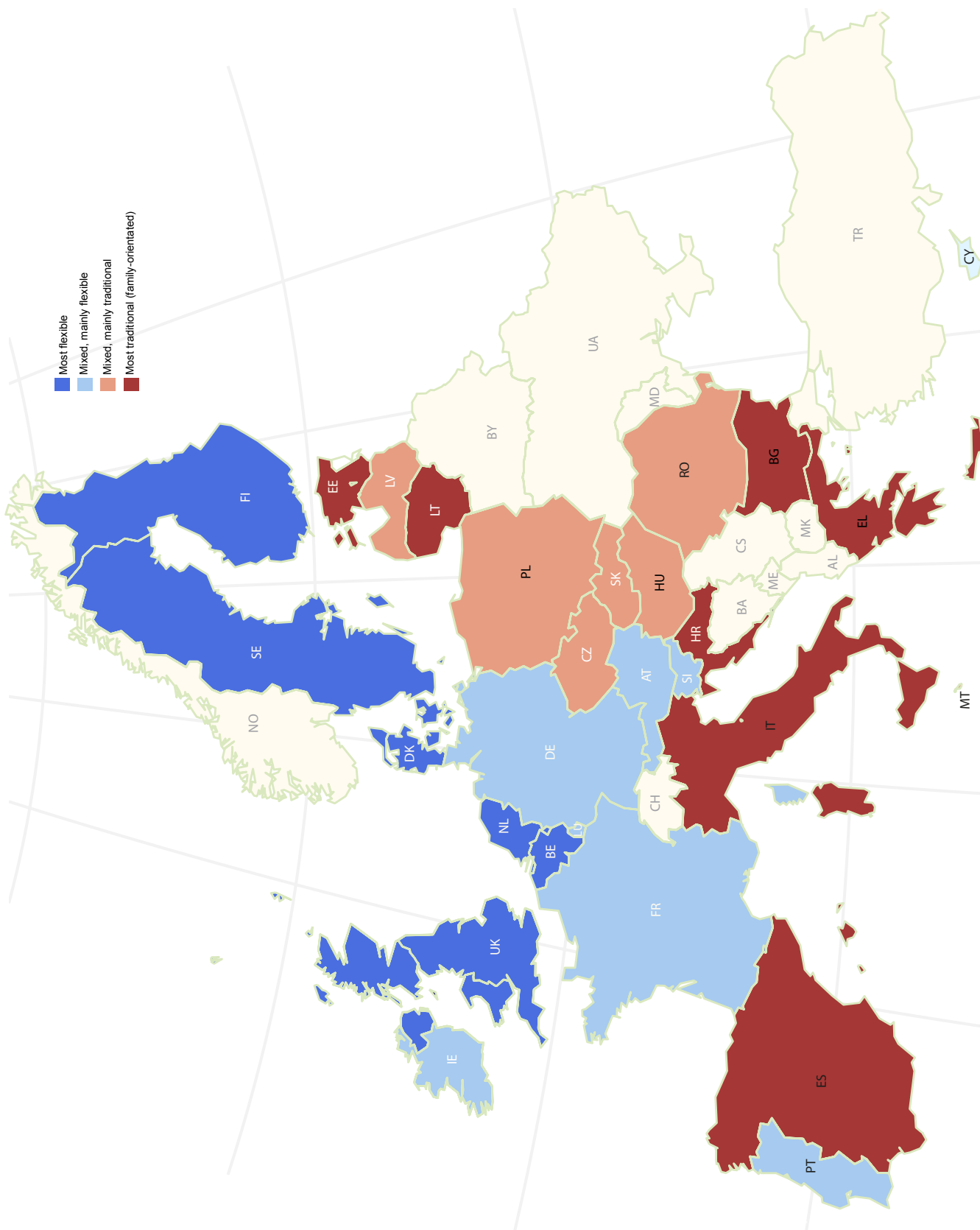
Finally, an examination of how replies to the EQLS question on access to child benefits are distributed across the four country groups provided ample indication that there are considerable differences between the country groups in the data.<sup>11</sup>

Access to child benefits (including alimony) differs significantly among the country groups, and between families of different structures.

- In the most flexible countries, over 80% of families with children receive child benefit, as do nearly all families in vulnerable situations – such as lone parents and jobless families. The rate of families receiving benefit has decreased since 2007, except for jobless couples and single-earner couples.
- In the mixed, mainly flexible countries, the pattern is similar, with nearly 75% of families receiving child benefit; however, the decrease between 2007 and 2011 is more significant, especially for dual-earner couples.
- Mixed, mainly traditional countries have quite a different pattern, with fewer than 50% of families receiving child benefit. Jobless families are much more likely to be receiving benefit than others. Since the crisis, access to benefit has lessened only for dual-earner couples and for working lone parents, while it has increased substantially for jobless families and single-earner couples.
- Families in the most traditional group were significantly less likely to receive child benefit in 2011 than in 2007. In these countries, fewer than 50% of lone parents receive either child benefit or alimony, and single- and dual-earner couple families do not differ significantly in their access to benefits.

<sup>11</sup> Table A2 in the Annex shows the distribution between the country groups in terms of EQLS data for 2007 and 2011.

Figure 1: Country groupings





## CHAPTER 1

# Family types and structures in Europe

# Family types and structures in Europe

European family structures and forms are changing, with an increasing diversity of family forms and family life (Kuronen, 2010). This trend is set to continue and has far-reaching consequences for European countries. In a report entitled the *Future of Families to 2030* the OECD stresses the importance of tracking changes in family and household structures because of their relevance in shaping socioeconomic outcomes. The report highlights how increasing numbers of single-parent families, cohabiting couples and reconstituted families could lead to more families being at greater risk of poverty. Equally, the increase in childless couples, divorce rates, remarriages and step-families may weaken family ties and undermine the capacity for informal family care. The study highlights the importance of studying the structure of modern European families in the context of family life (OECD, 2011b).<sup>12</sup>

The EQLS has examined differences and similarities in household living arrangements across the EU and monitored changes in family structures since 2003. The decreasing propensity to marry and start a family, the increased likelihood of relationship breakdown, and the increasing popularity of new types of relationships all point to changes in the processes of family formation and dissolution (Eurofound, 2010).

Furthermore, evidence is becoming available that shows that the economic crisis is altering the prevalence of different family forms in Europe. Families are breaking up due to increasing stress levels, suicides result in more lone-parent households and there is even discussion of a 'baby recession' as fertility rates decline across Europe (Eurostat, 2013b).

## Different family types across the EU

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the different family types by country, based on official Eurostat statistics. The overall columns show the proportion of households with children among all households.

There is considerable variation in the proportion of households that have children: over 40% in Ireland and Romania, but below 25% in Germany. Among households with children the proportion of lone-parent households is highest in Denmark (21%, but this is just 5% of all households) and Ireland (20%, or 9% of all households). It is lowest in Greece and Croatia (4% of households with children, or 1% of all households). Latvia has the highest rate of lone-parent households overall (29%), followed by Ireland (26%). In 2005 the UK was among the countries with the highest proportion of both lone-parent households (within all households) and the highest share of children living with a lone parent (among all children); in 2011, both of these measures had decreased significantly.

Similar patterns are found when looking at the OECD countries: almost 10% of children live in reconstituted households, and nearly 15% in single-parent households. One child in 15 lives with their grandparents (OECD, 2011b).

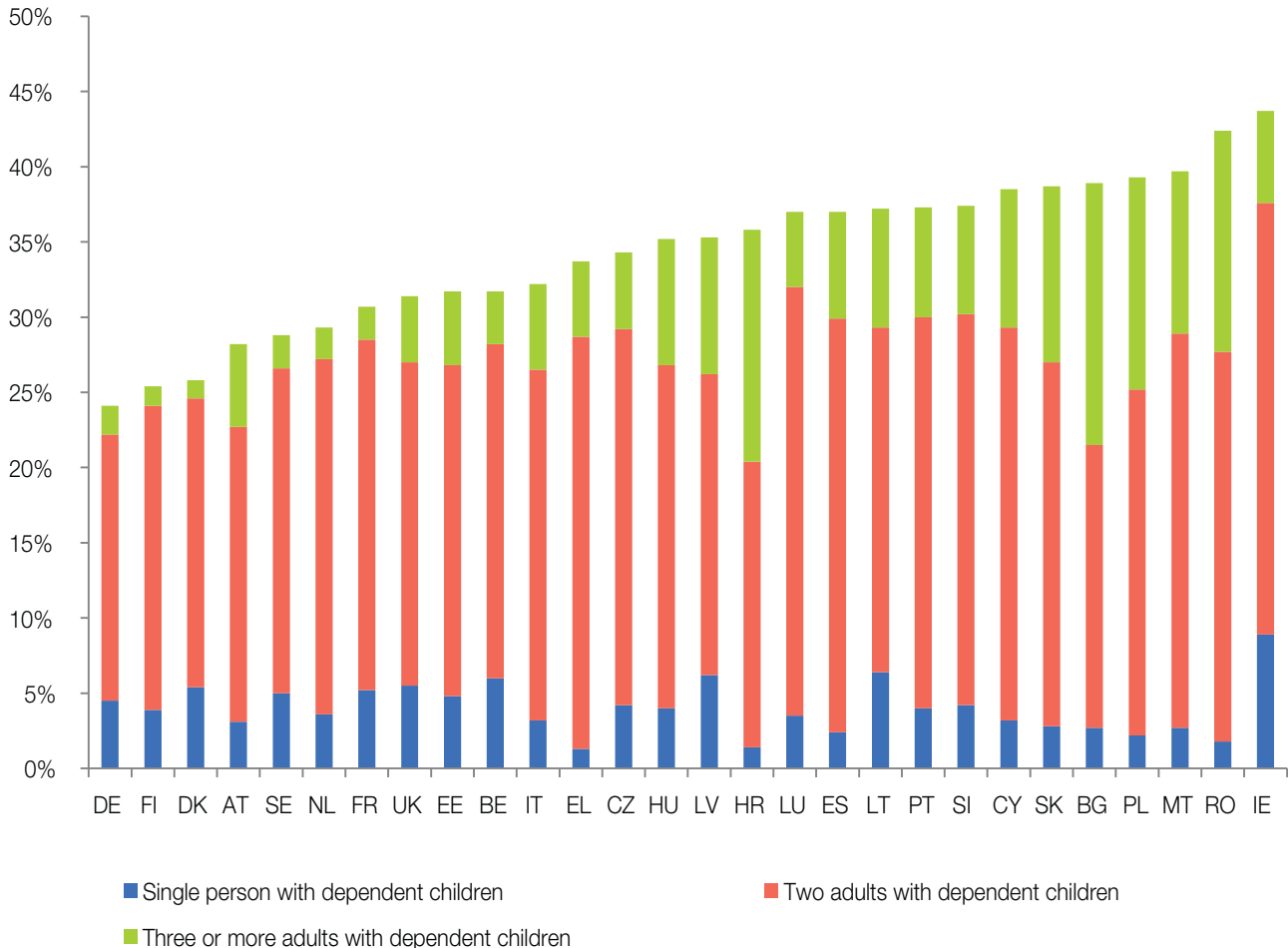
This large variation in different types of family forms is also noted by the EQLS. The 'nuclear family' continues to dominate, with couples with children still, by far, the most common family form in Europe (representing 68% of all households with children in the sample). However, the EQLS also shows that 16% of families consist of lone parents. Households comprising couples living with children and other relatives make up a further 5%. In 13% of households with children the child is not a dependent of the respondent, so their status is undetermined.

To further highlight this diversity, it is interesting to note that around 640 respondents indicated they live with a same-sex partner in the same household; of these respondents, around 25% are raising dependent children. This means that among the couples with children, around 2% are same-sex couples. Furthermore, lone parents are not, by default, single mothers, as single fathers account for 12% of these families. Finally, lone parents are not necessarily single: 4% indicated they were living with a partner, suggesting that 'living together' is not necessarily a straightforward concept.

<sup>12</sup> It is also important to follow closely the research activities carried out under the 'Families and societies' collaborative EU research project, coordinated by Stockholm University. This project has recently been launched to investigate the diversity of family forms, relationships and life courses in Europe as well as to assess the compatibility of current family policy with recent changes. (<http://www.familiesandsocieties.eu/>)



**Figure 2: Proportion of family types with children in all households, 2011 (%)**



Source: Eurostat, EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC)<sup>13</sup>

### Rainbow families

Kuronen (2010) points to the growing number of ‘rainbow families’ – families ‘with two or more people who share a same-sex orientation (for example, a couple) or with at least one lesbian or gay adult rearing a child’. Although rainbow families where the

children stem from previous heterosexual relationships are still more prevalent, in recent years there has also been an increase in rainbow families where same-sex couples realise the desire for a child via reproductive medicine, adoption or fostering.

Furthermore, a comparison between the four country groupings shows that, in the most flexible countries, the proportion of single-parent families is nearly three times as large as in the traditional (family-orientated) countries (21% as opposed to 8%). The proportion of households with three or more children is highest in Ireland and Belgium (19% of households with children, 8% of all households) and lowest in Greece

(3% of households with children, 1% of all households). Meanwhile, the proportion of households where children live with three or more adults (as extended families) is highest in Bulgaria (45% of households with children, 17% of all households) and Croatia (43% of households with children, 15% of all households).

<sup>13</sup> Unless indicated otherwise, the source for all figures and tables is the third EQLS, 2011.

### Extended families in Europe – a varied picture

A recent study by Iacovou and Skew (2011) highlights how patterns of extended families differ across the EU. In the Scandinavian countries, the small number of extended-family households mostly consist of adult children living with a partner and one (or both) of their parents.

In the southern and eastern European countries, extended-family households predominantly consist of three-generational households in which couples live with their parents and with their children.

In the UK and Ireland, the most common extended-family form is a three-generational household formed of a lone parent living with one or both parents.

In Austria and Luxembourg, a three-generational extended form is again the most common although, in these countries, couples rather than lone parents tend to be the middle generation.

Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and Poland stand out as having some of the largest households in Europe: there is a virtual absence of solo living among young people; there is substantial extended intergenerational co-residence, hence a high percentage of extended-family households; and lone-parent families are relatively scarce.

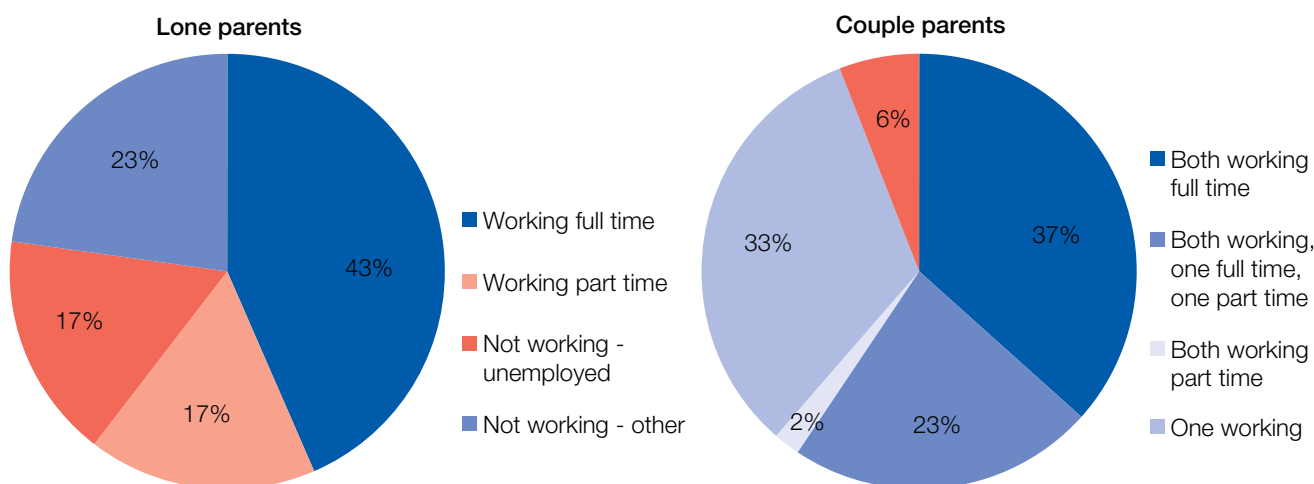
### Distribution of work in households

Employment status and distribution of work in a family can have a profound impact on quality of life, since these key factors influence income and work-life balance.

According to the EQLS, about 60% of lone parents are working, of whom around 66% work full time and 33% work part time. Of those not working, about 50% classify

themselves as unemployed, while the other 50% are in other categories, mostly homemakers. In comparison, in 94% of couple families in Europe, at least one parent is in paid work. For couple families in the EU, the most common setup is of both parents working full time, followed by one parent working full time, and finally by one parent working full time and one part time.

**Figure 3: Working patterns of parents, 2012**



When comparing lone mothers with partnered mothers it seems that both are likely to be employed, but partnered mothers are more likely to classify themselves as homemakers: 23% describe themselves as homemakers, while 7% give

their status as 'unemployed'. In contrast, lone mothers are less likely to be homemakers (only 14% describing themselves as such), instead more often actively seeking work, 15% classifying themselves as unemployed.

There are important differences between lone parents living alone with their children, and lone parents who also share the household with relatives: nearly 30% of lone parents living with relatives are unemployed, compared with 14% of lone parents who live only with their children. This may suggest that living with one's extended family might not be a voluntary arrangement, but a necessity due to unemployment. However, other explanations are possible. For example, when relatives are present, lone parents may wait longer to find a better quality job. Alternatively, lone parents living with relatives could be younger (their average age is 35 compared with 41 for all lone parents) and therefore more likely to be actively seeking work. However, while lone parents were more likely to be employed in 2011 than in 2007 (64% as against 60%), those living with relatives were less likely to be employed (40% as opposed to

48%), which again suggests that lone parents who lost their job may have had to move in with their families.

In couple families, including those living with other family members, more fathers and mothers were unemployed in 2011 than in 2007.

Table 5 shows the sample size in the EQLS for different types of families according to living arrangements and distribution of work in the four groups of countries and overall, in 2007 and 2011. In all countries, the largest group consists of couples living only with their children; most of these are dual-earners, constituting 50% of the total sample of families. A further 25% is made up of single-earner couple families; the remaining 25% includes other family groups.

**Table 5: Sample size for each household type and work distribution\* 2007 and 2011**

	2007					2011				
	Most flexible	Mixed, mainly flexible	Mixed, mainly traditional	Most traditional (family-orientated)	Total	Most flexible	Mixed, mainly flexible	Mixed, mainly traditional	Most traditional (family-orientated)	Total
Lone parent, working	236	255	199	192	882	246	316	197	187	946
Lone parent, not working	111	102	51	33	297	124	139	65	65	393
Lone parent, with relatives	13	30	68	44	155	15	37	74	55	181
Couple family, both working	1,221	1,527	1,207	1,011	4,966	1,126	1,638	1,054	1,028	4,846
Couple family, one working	353	793	551	583	2,280	347	795	452	734	2,328
Couple family, neither working	58	67	75	65	265	50	98	90	131	369
Couple family, with relatives, multiple earners	14	64	89	72	239	13	72	133	85	303
Couple family living with relatives, one earner or none	9	32	53	57	151		50	81	68	203
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,015</b>	<b>2,870</b>	<b>2,293</b>	<b>2,057</b>	<b>9,235</b>	<b>1,925</b>	<b>3,145</b>	<b>2,146</b>	<b>2,353</b>	<b>9,569</b>

Note: \*Samples are unweighted.

Analysis in this report was carried out for groups with at least 50 cases in the sample. This means that, for example, in the most flexible group of countries, extended families (lone parents or couple parents living with other relatives) were so uncommon that they were not analysed separately.

The following chapters concentrate on quality of life in these groups of families, comparing lone parents with couple

families, dual-earner families with single-earner and jobless families, and changes over time. Findings on the quality of life in extended families are shown separately at the end of each chapter.

Table 6 shows a further breakdown of those families with children, according to whether the parents work full time or part time.

**Table 6: Household type and employment status by country groups, 2007 and 2011 (%)**

	2007*					2011				
	Most flexible	Mixed, mainly flexible	Mixed, mainly traditional	Most traditional (family-orientated)	Total	Most flexible	Mixed, mainly flexible	Mixed, mainly traditional	Most traditional (family-orientated)	Total
Lone parent working part-time	22	18	6	19	<b>18</b>	27	20	10	12	<b>20</b>
Lone parent working full-time	37	48	68	68	<b>49</b>	33	49	65	62	<b>48</b>
Lone parent not working	41	35	25	13	<b>33</b>	40	31	25	25	<b>32</b>
<b>All lone parents</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Couple family: both working full-time						27	36	57	34	<b>37</b>
Couple family: both working, one full time, one part time	70	67	68	54	64	37	29	7	13	<b>23</b>
Couple family: both working part time						3	1	1	2	<b>2</b>
Couple family: one working (full time)	25	29	27	42	31	22	27	26	38	<b>29</b>
Couple family: one working (part time)						5	3	2	4	<b>4</b>
Couple family: neither working	5	3	5	4	4	6	4	7	9	<b>6</b>
<b>All couple families</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Note: \*Information on partner's working hours not available in 2007, so couple families are not broken down by part-time/full-time work.*

The proportion of working lone parents is highest in the traditional and mixed, mainly traditional countries (75% in both). These ratios have changed little since 2007 in the EU28 overall but in the most traditional group of countries the proportion of working lone parents has decreased. Many of these countries have been severely affected by the crisis, which may be the reason for the increase in lone parents out of work.

Using EU-SILC data, Chzhen and Bradshaw (2012) found that the proportion of lone parents working full time varies considerably from 16% in Ireland to 75% in Slovenia and Slovakia. Part-time work is more widespread among lone parents in the older Member States. While only 5% of lone parents in Slovenia do not participate in the labour market, more than 36% fall into this category in the UK, with 49% in Ireland, and 54% in Malta.

There are considerable differences between country groups with regard to couple families: in the most flexible countries, one parent usually works full time and one part time, while in the most traditional countries the single breadwinner

(full-time) form is most common. The scenario of both parents working full time is most common in mixed, mainly traditional countries; in these countries, any form of part-time work is rare.

Change in the full-time/part-time setup cannot be measured from the EQLS between 2007 and 2011, but overall there was a slight decrease in the proportion of dual-earner families and an increase in single-earner and jobless couple families, which was highest in the most traditional countries (where there was a five percentage-point drop in the proportion of dual-earners). This is again probably due to increasing unemployment here during the crisis.

Many countries in the most traditional group were deeply affected by the economic crisis; this is especially evident from unemployment figures: in the period covered by this report (between 2007 and 2011) unemployment increased by 13 percentage points in Spain, 11 percentage points in Lithuania, 9 percentage points in Greece, and 8 percentage points in Estonia.



## CHAPTER 2

# Standards of living in European families

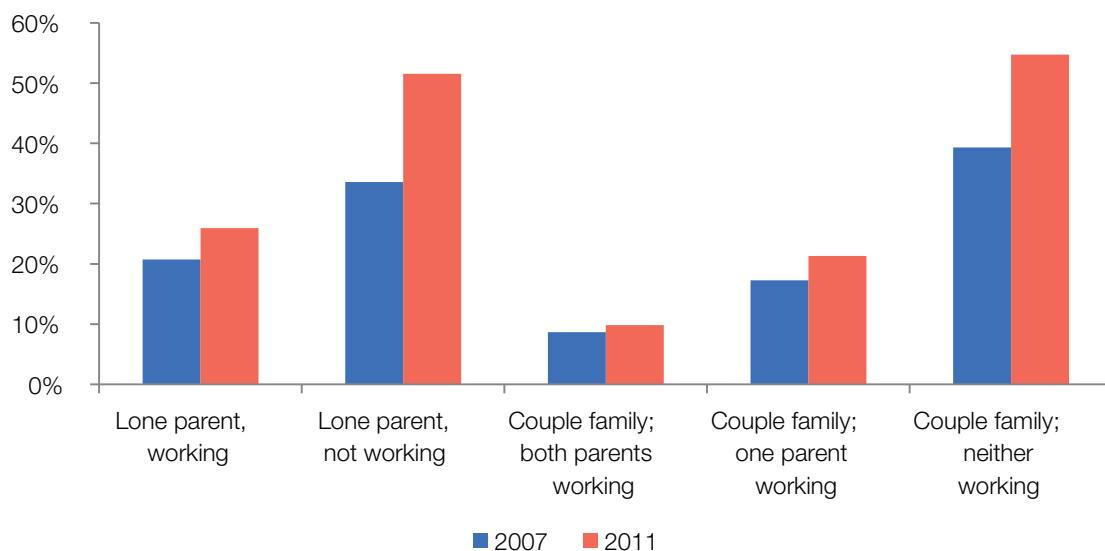
# Standards of living in European families

## Economic strain

European families are facing greater difficulty making ends meet than before the crisis. In nearly all EU countries the

proportion of households in this situation (on a six-point scale, saying that it is 'very difficult' or 'difficult' to make ends meet) has increased. In some countries (Greece, Slovakia, Ireland) the increase has been over 10 percentage points (Eurofound, 2012).

**Figure 4: Households and workers having difficulty making ends meet, 2007 and 2011 (%)**



*Q58. A household may have different sources of income and more than one household member may contribute to it. Thinking of your household's total monthly income: is your household able to make ends meet...? 'With difficulty' and 'with great difficulty'.*

This increase in financial strain has severely affected families with children. Previous cross-European research (Ugreninov et al, 2013) showed that households with multiple earners and few children are less likely to be poor, while one-parent households, non-earning households, and households with multiple children are more likely to be poor. In addition, it was found that family structure only matters for single- and multiple-earner families and no longer makes a difference among non-earning households. The EQLS shows that families in jobless households are the most likely to have difficulties

making ends meet; however, it also shows that jobless couple families more often have difficulties than lone parents (probably due to the larger household size). Jobless families were significantly more likely to face economic difficulties in 2011 than in 2007.

At the same time, working lone parents are also feeling more financial strain than before the crisis, as are single-earner couple families. In the latter group, this may reflect that being a single-earner family now is not necessarily a preference, since



this group probably includes previously dual-earner families where one parent has recently lost a job.

Dual-earner families are the least likely to have difficulty making ends meet and, interestingly, there has been no significant worsening for this group since the crisis, the

deterioration being most marked in families already in a vulnerable situation. However, it should be noted that some of the dual-earner families in 2007 may be single-earner families in 2011 as a result of one partner losing their job, as illustrated by the slight increase in single-earner families in the overall sample.

**Table 7: Difficulty making ends meet by country group, 2007 and 2011 (%)**

	2007				2011			
	Most flexible	Mixed, mainly flexible	Mixed, mainly traditional	Most traditional (family-oriented)	Most flexible	Mixed, mainly flexible	Mixed, mainly traditional	Most traditional (family-oriented)
Lone parent, working	13	19	40	22	22	21	46	26
Lone parent, not working	22	37	54	63	44	50	63	67
Couple parents, both working	3	8	15	9	5	8	17	13
Couple parents, one working	10	12	33	19	16	15	31	25
Couple parents, neither working	22	45	59	35	29	44	67	69
<b>All parents</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>24</b>

**Note:** Q58. A household may have different sources of income and more than one household member may contribute to it. Thinking of your household's total monthly income: is your household able to make ends meet...? 'With difficulty', and 'With great difficulty'. Green shading indicates less difficulty in making ends meet, red shading, more.

The overall figures for families' ability to make ends meet hide significant differences between country groups. Between 20% and 25% of working lone parents are having difficulty making ends meet in three of the groups (around the EU28 average), but in the mainly traditional Member States they are significantly more likely to have economic difficulties (46%); this has increased by six percentage points since 2007.

Jobless lone parents are facing difficulties everywhere, but this rate is higher in the most traditional countries and in the mainly traditional countries. In 2007, in the most traditional

countries, lone parents not in work already had significant difficulties. Since the crisis, jobless couple families have also been affected, the proportion of those unable to make ends meet doubling. Some 69% of these families are now facing difficulties compared with 29% in the most flexible group. At the same time, in the two flexible country groups, it is jobless single parents who have mostly been affected by an increase in economic strain, the proportion of those unable to make ends meet in the most flexible group increasing by 22 percentage points, and by 13 percentage points in the mainly flexible group.

## Household debt

**Table 8: Arrears by household type and employment status, 2007 and 2011 (%)**

	2007			2011					
	No arrears	Rent or mortgage	Utility bills	No arrears	Rent or mortgage	Utility bills	Consumer* loans	Informal loans*	Arrears in all areas*
Lone parent, working	75	18	19	71	17	21	15	12	6
Lone parent, not working	67	18	29	46	29	42	20	18	7
Couple family, two earner	88	8	10	82	11	14	11	8	6
Couple family, one earner	81	12	17	74	16	21	14	10	6
Couple family, neither working	66	22	29	46	31	39	26	20	8
All parents	83	11	14	75	15	19	13	10	6

*Note: Q60. Has your household been in arrears at any time during the past 12 months, that is, unable to pay as scheduled any of the following? \* Only asked in 2011. Red shading indicates a greater extent of arrears; green, a lesser extent.*

Overall, more families ran into arrears in 2011 than in 2007: families in general were more likely to have difficulty paying for accommodation (rent or mortgage) and utility bills. Naturally, jobless families are most at risk of debt, but over 20% of working lone parents and single-earner couple families had inadequate funds in 2011 to pay for utilities. Informal loans from friends and families are one of the ways for families to cover their debts, but many families (especially those out of work) find it hard to pay these back.

While all types of arrears are more common in the mixed traditional and the most traditional groups of countries than in the two flexible groups, utility bills pose the greatest difficulties in terms of repayment (the figure is five percentage points higher than the EU average). The proportion of families unable to pay their bills has increased at a similar rate in all country

groups. The most traditional (family-orientated) countries saw the largest average increase in debt (11 percentage points as opposed to 7 percentage points in the other three groups). This was experienced even by dual-earner couple families (with an increase in the numbers of families in arrears of 6 percentage points), but working lone parents were especially affected (an increase of 19 percentage points) (see Table A4 in Annex 3).

## Housing insecurity

Some 17% of jobless families fear they may need to move in the next year as they can no longer afford to live in their present home. Since 2007 this rate increased by six percentage points for jobless lone parents and by nine percentage points for jobless couple families.

**Table 9: Housing insecurity by country group 2007 and 2011 (%)**

	2nd EQLS (2007)					3rd EQLS (2011)				
	Most flexible	Mixed, mainly flexible	Mixed, mainly traditional	Most traditional (family-oriented)	Total	Most flexible	Mixed, mainly flexible	Mixed, mainly traditional	Most traditional (family-oriented)	Total
Lone parent, working	6	8	9	7	7	10	6	11	10	9
Lone parent, not working	8	12	22	11	11	16	16	16	26	17
Couple parents, both working	2	2	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	3
Couple parents, one working	2	4	5	5	4	8	4	6	8	7
Couple parents, neither working	9	8	11	6	8	9	23	9	20	17
All parents	3	4	5	5	4	6	5	5	7	6

**Note:** Q20 How likely or unlikely do you think it is that you will need to leave your accommodation within the next six months because you can no longer afford it? Proportion answering 'likely' or 'very likely'. Red shading indicates greater insecurity; green, less insecurity.

The increase in housing insecurity for jobless households with children increased especially in the most traditional group, which is probably another reflection of increased unemployment in these countries since the crisis. However, in the mixed, mainly traditional group, little change was recorded in housing insecurity. This is probably because these countries have a high rate of owner-occupancy (without a mortgage), ranging from 63% of the population in Malta to 96% in Romania (Eurostat data, 2011).

## Deprivation

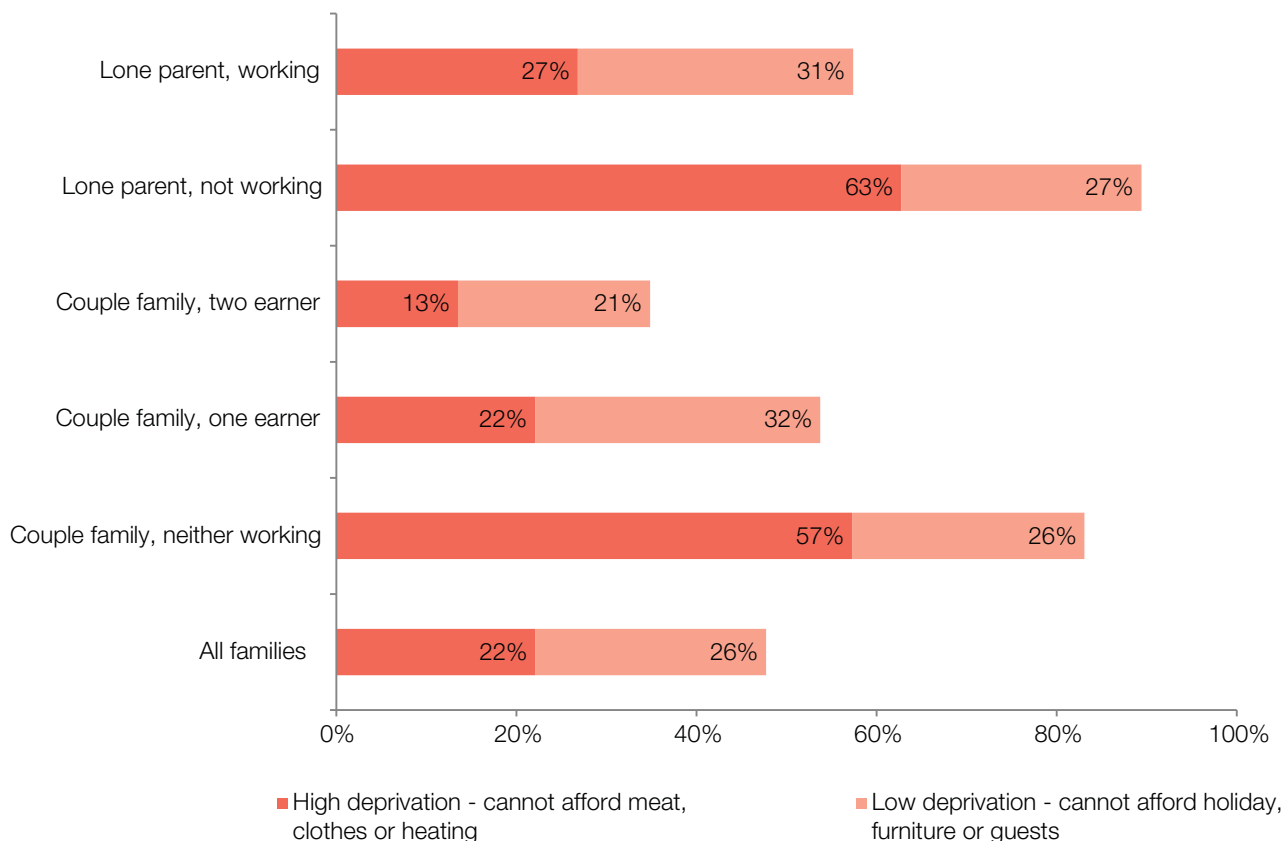
Deprivation in the EQLS is measured by asking the respondent whether their household could afford each of the following in a list of six items:

- to keep their home adequately warm;
- to pay for a week's annual holiday away from home (not staying with relatives);

- to replace any worn-out furniture;
- to have a meal with meat, chicken, fish every second day if desired;
- to buy new, rather than second-hand, clothes;
- to have friends or family for a drink or meal at least once a month.

In most countries, not being able to afford essential items such as food, clothes and heating were found to have more effect on various aspects of well-being than not being able to afford a holiday, furniture or to entertain guests (Eurofound, 2013a). Figure 5 shows the extent of deprivation in European families in 2011. A high level of deprivation is experienced when one cannot afford at least one of the first three items. A low level of deprivation is defined as being able to afford the first three items, but being unable to afford at least one of the second group of items.

**Figure 5: Deprivation in families, 2011 (%)**



**Note:** Q59. There are some things that many people cannot afford, even if they would like them. For each of the following things on this card, can I just check whether your household can afford it if you want it?

Jobless lone-parent households are the most likely to face a high level of deprivation, followed by jobless couple families. The rate of jobless families facing a high level of deprivation increased significantly between 2007 and 2011 – by 19 percentage points for jobless lone parents and by 18 percentage points for jobless couples. Other types of families had only slight increases in the rate of high levels of deprivation. At the same time there was no significant difference in the proportion of families facing low levels of deprivation. The proportion of families that are not deprived of any item has decreased (by eight percentage points overall).

The deprivation index measures the average number of items a household cannot afford. It includes all items, making comparisons easier over time. Table 10 shows the deprivation index by country group.

Again, it becomes clear that jobless households, both lone parents and couple families, have experienced the greatest increase in deprivation since the crisis. For instance, while jobless lone parents were unable to afford an average of 2.3 items in 2007, this rose to 3.1 items in 2011. No change was recorded

for working lone parents, a score of 1.4 being recorded in both 2007 and 2011. Single-earner couple families also had a statistically significant increase in the number of items they cannot afford, from 1.1 to 1.3 items, while dual-earner couple families remain the least deprived after the crisis, with no significant change since 2007, on average.

The results by country groups show that the countries in the mainly traditional group, nearly all of which are located in eastern and central Europe, have the highest average rates of deprivation (1.8 in 2007 and 1.9 in 2011). This is true for all types of families, but the most vulnerable are jobless families and lone parents. It is the countries in the most flexible group (most of which are the highest-income countries in Europe) that have the lowest average levels of deprivation; however, even in these countries, families out of work (including jobless lone parents) still face very high levels of deprivation, despite the generous benefits that group these countries together.

These findings confirm those of earlier studies. In their analysis of lone parents in Europe, Chzhen and Bradshaw (2012) found that children growing up in lone-parent families are substantially

**Table 10: Average number of items household cannot afford, by country group, 2007 and 2011**

	2007					2011				
	Most flexible	Mixed, mainly flexible	Mixed, mainly traditional	Most traditional (family-orientated)	Total	Most flexible	Mixed, mainly flexible	Mixed, mainly traditional	Most traditional (family-orientated)	Total
Working lone parent	1.0	1.3	2.6	1.3	<b>1.4</b>	1.3	1.1	2.6	1.4	<b>1.4</b>
Lone parent, not working	2.0	2.3	3.6	2.5	<b>2.3</b>	3.2	2.7	3.7	3.4	<b>3.1</b>
Dual-earner couple families	0.3	0.5	1.3	0.6	<b>0.6</b>	0.5	0.5	1.4	0.8	<b>0.7</b>
Single-earner couple families	0.6	1.0	2.2	0.9	<b>1.1</b>	1.2	0.9	2.2	1.4	<b>1.3</b>
Couple families, neither working	1.8	2.0	3.2	1.7	<b>2.1</b>	2.5	2.4	3.5	3.0	<b>2.8</b>
<b>All parents</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.2</b>

**Note:** Q59. There are some things that many people cannot afford, even if they would like them. For each of the following things on this card, can I just check whether your household can afford it if you want it?

Red shading indicates greatest deprivation, green shading, the least.

more likely to be deprived than other children in all countries studied. They also found large variations across Europe, with the highest levels of deprivation in Romania and Bulgaria and the lowest in Sweden, Luxembourg and Denmark.

In the EQLS, the greatest increase in deprivation between 2007 and 2011 was recorded among jobless lone parents

in the most flexible countries (an increase of 1.2 items in the index, and of 32 percentage points in the proportion experiencing high levels of deprivation) and among jobless couple families in the most traditional (family-orientated) countries (an increase of 1.3 items and 30 percentage points) (see Table A3 in Annex 3 for country group comparisons in deprivation levels).

## Extended families: standard of living

Only a small proportion (13%) of extended families that contain several earners have difficulties making ends meet, and since 2007 this number has decreased. Levels of deprivation also remained low between 2007 and 2011 in these families compared with the most vulnerable families (jobless families and lone-parent families). Keeping in mind that there are more extended families living together in 2011 than in 2007, this suggests that economic strain may be one reason for living together. Lone parents living with relatives are less likely to be in debt than other lone parents, and they are less likely to be deprived than jobless lone parents living alone with their

children. However, couple parents living with extended families where there is only one earner (or none) are more likely to face debt and have a high rate of deprivation, with both measures getting worse since 2007.

Interestingly, extended families (regardless of work status) are the least likely to experience housing insecurity, suggesting that family members tend to move into accommodation owned by a relative. Correspondingly, extended family households are more likely to live in accommodation that is owned outright, without a mortgage (59% as opposed to 30% of other families).



## CHAPTER 3

# Work and work–life balance

# Work and work–life balance

The ability to balance work and family life is an important aspect of people's quality of life, especially for families with children. As the OECD notes, the terms and conditions under which working parents have to cope with their work–life balance varies across the income spectrum. Time and space constraints, opportunities to outsource care, patterns of work schedules, and other parameters differ greatly (OECD, 2011b, p.129). The EQLS measures work–life balance with a series of questions that are asked to all respondents in paid work. Most of the analysis of parents' working hours in this chapter is carried out separately for fathers and mothers due to the significant overall gender differences in working hours.<sup>14</sup>

## Working hours and work preferences

Table 11 summarises working hours in different types of households. One conclusion that can be drawn from this analysis is that working single mothers, whether they work full time or part time, work fewer hours than their male counterparts, and work fewer hours than men in both dual-earner and single-earner households. Single mothers also feel job insecurity more often than single fathers (16% as opposed to 8% think they might lose their job in the next six months). Single fathers, on average, worked more hours in 2011 than in 2007 (an increase of six hours per week), while there was no significant change for single mothers.

In 79% of single-earner couple families, it is the father who works full time (on average, 45 hours per week). In just 9% of these families, the mother works full time (41 hours on average). In a relatively high proportion of families only one parent works part time and, on average, for relatively few hours; these families are likely to include some where one parent recently lost a job, and may have particular issues in making ends meet.

<sup>14</sup> Same-sex couple families are excluded from the analysis in the gendered analyses due to difficulties in coding the categories.



**Table 11: Working hours by household type and gender, 2011**

		% of families	Father's average weekly working hours	Mother's average weekly working hours
<b>Lone parents</b>	Lone father working part time	4	28	
	Lone father working full time	74	49	
	Lone father not working	22		
	<i>All lone fathers</i>	<b>100</b>	<b>48</b>	
	Lone mother working part time	22		23
	Lone mother working full time	45		42
	Lone mother not working	33		
	<i>All lone mothers</i>	<b>100</b>		<b>36</b>
<b>Couple parents: both working</b>	Both working full time	60	44	41
	Father works full time, mother works part time	35	44	23
	Mother works full time, father works part time	3	22	41
	Both working part time	3	23	23
	<i>All dual-earner couples</i>	<b>100</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Couple parents: one working</b>	Father works full time, mother does not work	79	45	
	Mother works full time, father does not work	10		41
	Father works part time, mother does not work	5	21	
	Mother works part time, father does not work	6		21
	<i>All single-earner couples</i>	<b>100</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>34</b>

**Note:** Q7 How many hours do you normally work per week in your main job, including any paid or unpaid overtime?

Q7b About how many hours per week did you work in this additional job or business or in agriculture? Please give an average figure for the last four working weeks.

Q9 How many hours does your partner normally work per week including any paid or unpaid overtime?

\* Working hours were asked only of respondents in paid employment. 'Part time' is defined here as working less than 35 hours per week. Green shading indicates longer working hours; red shading, shorter.

**Table 12: Working hours preferences by household type, employment status and gender, 2011 (%)**

			Respondent would prefer to work...					
			...not at all	...part time	...full time	...more hours	...the same hours	...fewer hours
Lone parent	Father	employed	5	8	86	6	38	56
		unemployed	0	23	77			
		inactive*	22	34	43			
	Mother	employed full time	1	29	70	7	40	53
		employed part time	1	71	28	47	35	18
		unemployed	6	45	49			
		inactive*	11	55	34			
Couple parent	Father	employed full time	1	11	88	9	44	47
		employed part time	2	61	37	54	39	7
		unemployed	2	8	89			
		inactive*	20	20	61			
	Mother	employed full time	2	31	67	5	41	54
		employed part time	2	79	18	32	50	18
		unemployed	1	41	58			
		inactive*	15	56	29			

**Note:** Q8 If you could freely choose the number of your working hours while taking into account the need to earn your living, how many hours per week would you prefer to work at present?

Q10 How many hours per week would you prefer your partner to work?

\*Inactive means those who are not working, but are not unemployed.

Looking at working hour preferences, an overwhelming majority of lone mothers and coupled mothers alike would be willing to work if given the opportunity to choose their working hours, with over 50% of inactive mothers preferring to work part time. Most mothers in full-time work would prefer to work less, regardless of household status. However, most single mothers in part-time work would like to increase their working hours, while most coupled mothers in part-time work are happy with their working hours.

Most lone fathers would prefer to work full-time, though those currently working would like to decrease their working hours. Country groups are significantly different in this respect with part-time work often being the preference for mothers in the most flexible countries and full-time work preferred in the mainly traditional countries (see Table A5 in Annex 3).

## Work–life conflict

Table 13 shows the proportion of working parents experiencing conflict in terms of their work–life balance. Where conflict was reported by the parent – at work, at home, or both – they experienced it at least several times each month. Where no conflict, or only a little, was reported, it indicates that it was experienced less frequently than several times per month or – obviously – not at all.

For all types of families with children, conflicts of work and family have increased since 2007, both in terms of the frequency of severe conflict (problems both at work and at home) and moderate conflict (problems either at home or at work). Lone parents working full time are the most likely to experience

**Table 13: Level of work–life conflict, 2007 and 2011 (%)**

	2007			2011		
	Only little conflict or none	Conflict either at work or home	Conflict both at work and home	Only little conflict or none	Conflict either at work or home	Conflict both at work and home
Lone parent working part time	51	39	10	36	46	18
Lone parent working full time	42	46	13	28	49	23
<i>All single parents</i>	45	44	12	30	48	22
Couple: both working full time				39	45	16
Couple: respondent full time, partner part time				41	47	12
Couple: respondent part time, partner full time				52	37	11
Couple: both working part time				51	43	7
Couple: respondent works full time, partner does not work	46	43	12	37	44	19
Couple: respondent works part time, partner does not work	53	28	18	40	40	20
<i>All couple families</i>	46	41	12	41	44	15

**Note:** Q12a I have come home from work too tired to do some of the household jobs which need to be done.

Q12b It has been difficult for me to fulfil my family responsibilities because of the amount of time I spend on the job.

Q12c I have found it difficult to concentrate at work because of my family responsibilities.

No data are available for partner's working hours in 2007.

Red shading indicates greater work-life conflict; green shading, less conflict.

work–life conflict, and the increase for them is far greater (a rise of 10 percentage points in severe conflict) than for couple parents (a rise of 3 percentage points).

Interestingly, in single-earner couple families the working partner experiences a high degree of work–life conflict regardless of whether they work part time or full time. This may be explained by their being the only partner who needs to balance their work and family life; almost 75% of single earners, whether working full time or part time, would prefer their partner to work (72% and 74% respectively). On the other hand, in dual-earner families, a parent working part time is significantly less likely to experience such conflict than a parent working full time, who, in turn, reports less conflict than workers in single-earner families.

These findings are not necessarily true for all country groups. Lone parents everywhere are the most likely to experience work–life conflict, but the difference between single-earner and dual-earner couple families, and between parents working part time and full time, is not universal. In the mainly flexible group, where the lowest levels of work–life conflict are reported overall, full-time workers are most likely to feel a relatively high level of conflict, and dual-earner families are as likely to experience work–life conflict as single-earner families. The reason for this may be that, for many of these countries, the single-breadwinner model is still the most common. In the other three groups, single-earner couple families are more vulnerable to work–life conflict than dual-earner families. In the mainly traditional group, single-earner part-time workers report high levels

of work–life conflict, as do parents working full-time whose partner works part-time. In the most flexible group, single-earner families report greater conflict than dual-earner families, regardless of their working hours (see Table A6 in Annex 3).

## Access to childcare services

Respondents who indicated that they used, or wanted to use, childcare services in the 12 months prior to the survey (typically

families with children below school age) were asked whether they had experienced any of the four types of barriers to use of the service: cost, availability, access and quality of childcare services (multiple answers were possible).

For most families, the cost of childcare is the main barrier. Lone parents, especially those working part time, are the most likely to cite cost as a barrier, followed by availability. There is little difference between working and jobless lone parents in this respect.

**Table 14: Families having difficulty accessing childcare, 2011 (%)**

	Cost	Availability	Access	Quality	Difficulty with any	Difficulty with all
Lone parent working part time	77	63	39	18	83	33
Lone parent working full time	61	59	45	32	77	35
Lone parent not working	68	64	45	34	81	37
<i>All single parents</i>	67	61	44	29	80	35
Couple: both working full time	58	60	44	26	78	26
Couple: both working, one full time, one part time	54	50	36	22	74	19
Couple: both working part time	56	59	36	23	69	16
Couple: one working (full time)	57	55	36	28	73	27
Couple: one working (part time)	49	46	38	29	67	26
Couple: neither work	65	55	42	29	78	34
<i>All couple parents</i>	57	55	39	26	75	24

**Note:** Q54a\_1 Could you please tell me for each of the following care services if you or someone close to you have used it or would have liked to use it in the last 12 months? – Child care services – I or someone else in my household

Q55 To what extent did each of the following factors make it difficult or not for you, or someone close to you, to use childcare services? – Cost, Availability (such as waiting lists, lack of services), Access (for example, because of distance or opening-hours), Quality of care  
Red shading indicates greater difficulty; green shading, less difficulty.

Jobless couples also commonly have difficulties in accessing childcare because of cost. Interestingly, single-earner and dual-earner couples are similar in citing cost as a barrier.

Access to childcare differs significantly in the four country groups, confirming the different family policy models. Families in the most flexible, and mainly flexible, countries were the most likely to use or wish to have used childcare services in the previous year (21% and 23%). In the mainly traditional and traditional countries (many of which are characterised by a low female employment rate and few children under the age of three in formal childcare), a very low proportion of families used or wanted to use childcare services (12% and 13% respectively).

In terms of costs, OECD research shows that the Scandinavian countries and France lead the EU in public childcare provisions and benefits aimed at reducing childcare costs for families (OECD, 2011b). The EQLS shows that cost was the main barrier in three of the four country groups, a common issue especially in the most traditional countries (66%) and the mainly traditional countries (65%) and slightly less so in the most flexible (59%) and the mainly flexible countries (54%). In the mainly flexible group, availability was the most common problem (63%); this is the least frequent barrier in the most flexible group, but is still an issue (49%). Barriers due to physical access or quality were mentioned less often; these issues are most common in the mainly traditional group (48% and 36% respectively).

### Extended families: working time and work-life balance

Lone parents living with relatives are less likely to be in employment. This could be because they need additional support from the family because they are unemployed; it could be due to other reasons – being younger, for instance, or having altered their job-seeking behaviour. However, 75% of economically inactive lone parents living with relatives would like to work; furthermore, those who are working are working relatively long hours (40 per week). Lone parents living with their family are less likely to experience work-life balance conflict than other parents: 48% are struggling, as against 70% of other lone parents. This suggests that this is one area where family can provide significant support.

Couple families living with relatives work the average number of hours per week, but in those extended families where one

parent is the single earner in the family, he or she works very long hours on average (48 per week).

Parents living with other relatives, both lone parents and couple families, were less likely to have difficulties with childcare than other families; perhaps they had less need of childcare because they have family members who can perform these services. 69% of lone parents with relatives had childcare problems vs. 80% of other lone parents; for couples the difference was smaller, but statistically significant: 72% vs. 75%. For such parents, the most common issue was cost; this was most pronounced in the most traditional and the traditional countries.



## CHAPTER 4

# Subjective and mental well-being

# Subjective and mental well-being

## Life satisfaction and happiness

The EQLS has a series of questions on subjective and mental well-being. This chapter focuses on four measures:

- satisfaction with life in general;
- happiness;
- optimism about the future;
- the WHO-5 mental well-being index, which measures how the respondent has been feeling over the previous two weeks on five indicators.

The average rating for life satisfaction in the EU28 is 7.1 and the average rating for happiness is 7.4 on a scale of 1–10 (Eurofound, 2013). People living with children in their household tend to rate their happiness higher than average, as illustrated by the total figure for families in Table 15.

Employment plays a key role in the subjective well-being of parents. Lone parents who are not working and live alone with their children have the lowest ratings for life satisfaction and for happiness. For coupled parents in a single-earner household, the issue of whether the respondent or their partner is the breadwinner seems to be less important; however, parents in these households have lower ratings of subjective well-being than parents in dual-earner households. Parents living with a partner and children in a jobless household also have particularly low ratings for life satisfaction. While ratings for life satisfaction and happiness have not changed significantly in the overall EU28 population since 2007 (Eurofound, 2012), parents in jobless households experienced a statistically significant decrease in life satisfaction and happiness during this time.

Ratings of subjective well-being in the most flexible and mainly flexible groups of countries are higher on average than in the two other groups; ratings are lowest in the mainly traditional

**Table 15: Life satisfaction and happiness, 2007 and 2011**

		2007		2011	
		Life satisfaction	Happiness	Life satisfaction	Happiness
Lone parent, working		6.5	6.9	6.7	7.1
Lone parent, not working		5.7	6.6	5.5	6.3
Couple parent, both working		7.5	7.9	7.6	7.9
Couple parents, one working	if respondent works	7.1	7.6	7.2	7.6
	if respondent's partner works	7.0	7.5	7.2	7.7
Couple parents, neither working		6.6	7.4	6.4	7.1
<b>All parents</b>		<b>7.2</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>7.7</b>

**Note:** Q30. All things considered, how satisfied would you say you are with your life these days? Please tell me on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means very dissatisfied and 10 means very satisfied.

Q41. Taking all things together on a scale of 1 to 10, how happy would you say you are? Here 1 means you are very unhappy and 10 means you are very happy. Green shading indicates greater satisfaction; red shading, less.



group, which contains countries with the lowest per capita GDP – a measure that shows some correlation with subjective well-being (Eurofound, 2013a). However, the subjective well-being of jobless lone parents remains remarkably low in the two flexible groups (5.6 and 5.4). The decrease in life satisfaction and happiness, between 2007 and 2011, for jobless lone parents was largest in the most flexible group; however, it was not significant in the mainly flexible group. The decrease for jobless couple parents was significant only in the two traditional groups. Interestingly, in the mainly traditional group, only the happiness of jobless parents seems to have decreased between 2007 and 2011 – not their life satisfaction.

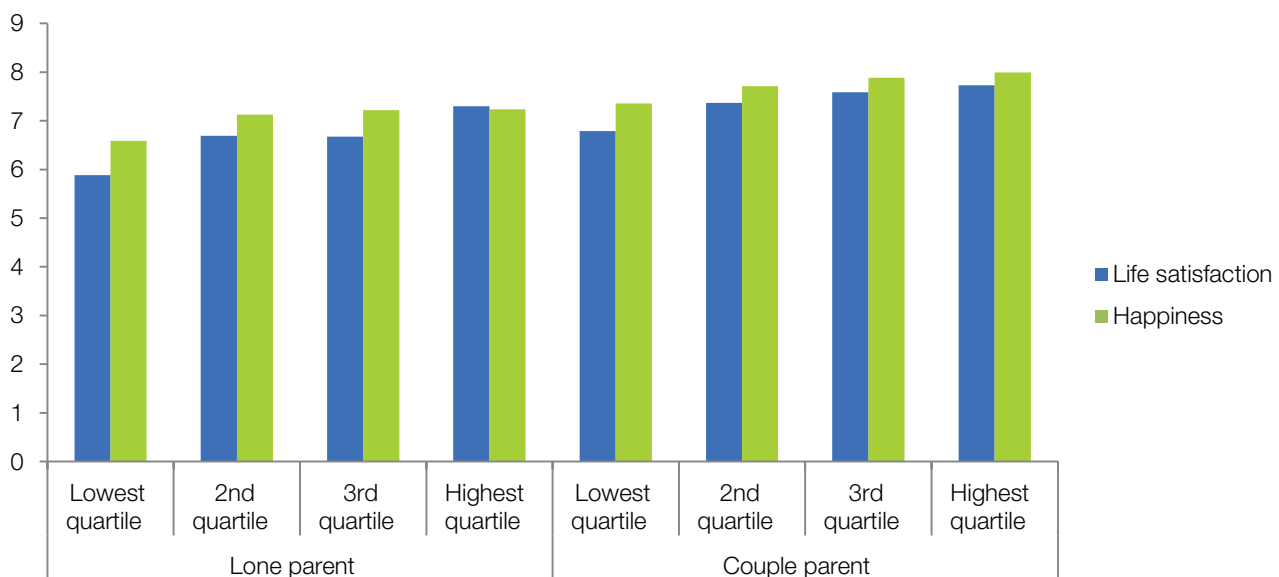
Another interesting difference emerging between country groups is that in single-earner couples in both the mainly flexible group and the mainly traditional group there is little difference between the subjective well-being of the working

partner and the stay-at-home partner. However, a difference emerges in the most flexible group: here, the stay-at-home partner has greater life satisfaction and happiness than the earning partner. This is the opposite in the most traditional group, where the working partner has a higher rating of subjective well-being than the stay-at-home partner. One explanation might be that in the most traditional group staying at home is slightly less likely to be voluntary: inactive parents here are more likely to wish to work (90%) than in the most flexible group (80%) (see Annex 3, Table A8 for country group tables).

## Income and life satisfaction

Both life satisfaction and happiness correlate strongly with income (Eurofound, 2013d); this is apparent both in the case of lone parents and couple families.

**Figure 6: Life satisfaction and happiness, by income quartile and family type, 2011**



**Note:** Q30. All things considered, how satisfied would you say you are with your life these days? Please tell me on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means very dissatisfied and 10 means very satisfied.

Q41. Taking all things together on a scale of 1 to 10, how happy would you say you are? Here 1 means you are very unhappy and 10 means you are very happy.

As Figure 6 shows, life satisfaction increases with each income quartile for both lone parents and couple parents. However, lone parents in the highest income quartile still have lower life satisfaction than couple parents in the second quartile and above. The happiness of lone parents in the highest income quartile remains below that of couple parents in the lowest income quartile. In addition, there is little difference in the happiness of lone parents between the top three quartiles. Both of these findings suggest that having a partner is more important

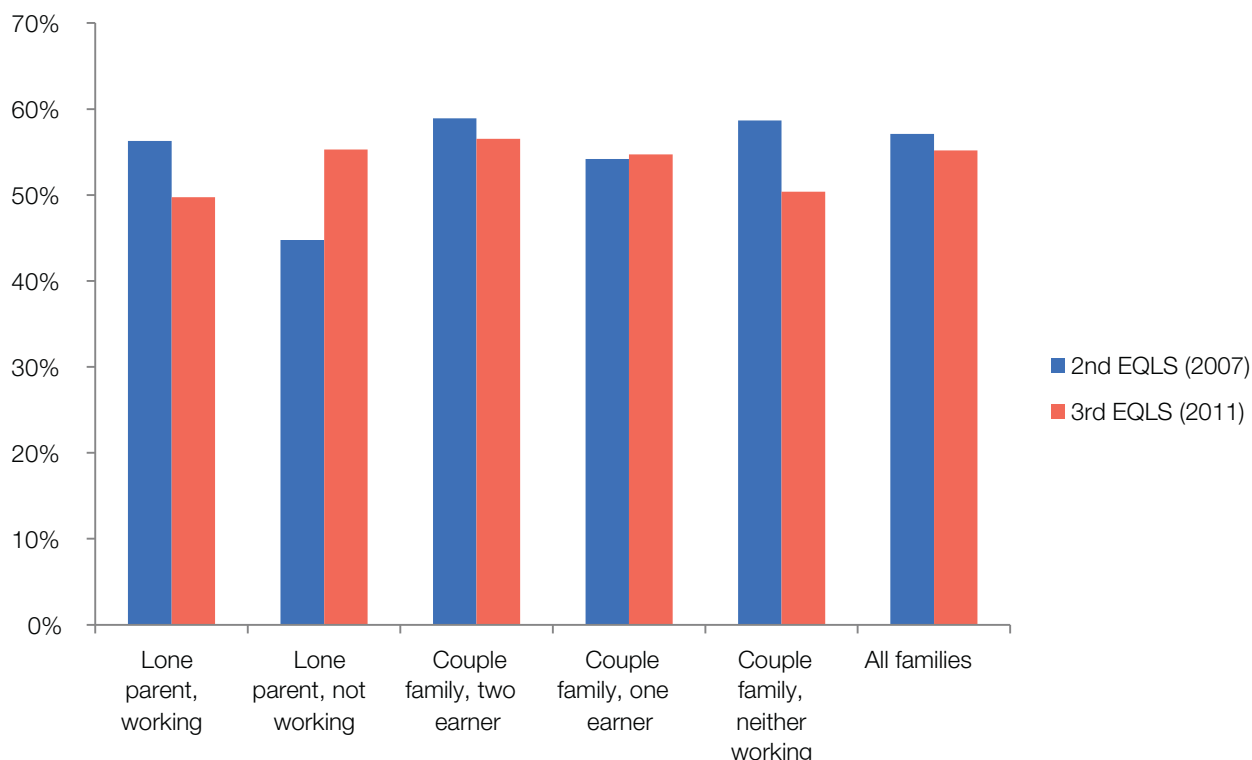
for happiness than is income. The difference between life satisfaction in the lowest and highest income quartiles is larger for lone parents than for couple parents in all country groups. The largest difference, according to income, was recorded in the mainly traditional countries (a 2.2-point difference for lone parents, and a 1.3-point difference for couple parents); the lowest was recorded in the mainly flexible countries (a 1.2-point difference for lone parents, and 0.6 points for couple parents) (see Table A9 in Annex 3).

## Optimism about the future

Another subjective measure, optimism about the future, did have a measurable downwards change since the onset of the

crisis for the overall population in the EU28 (Eurofound, 2012). Again, people living with children are slightly more optimistic than the general population (55% as against 52%).

**Figure 7: Optimism about the future by household type and employment status, 2007 and 2011 (%)**



**Note:** Q29a I am optimistic about the future; figures are for those who said they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

Optimism about the future decreased among families, on average, by two percentage points (which is statistically significant). The decrease was largest among jobless couple families perhaps because, in 2011, the prospects of finding a job were lower than in 2007. Optimism also decreased significantly among working lone parents, but increased among jobless lone parents.

Investigating these findings further by country groups, it seems that working lone parents are significantly more optimistic in the most flexible group than in the other three groups (61% as against 42%–47%). Moreover, in the most flexible countries, they experienced no decrease in optimism between 2007 and 2011. In contrast, in the other three groups, the decrease has been significant. The increase recorded in optimism among jobless lone parents took place only in the mainly flexible and the most traditional groups. Jobless couple families, on the

other hand, experienced a decrease in all four country groups. The difference in optimism among lone parents between different groups is something that may be explained by exploring changes in policy since 2007, especially as optimism correlates strongly with trust in the government (Eurofound, 2012).

## Mental well-being

Mental well-being in the EQLS is measured with the help of the WHO-5 mental well-being index, on a scale of 1 to 100.<sup>15</sup> On this index the average score for mental well-being in the EU28, as recorded by the EQLS, is 63. Overall, as with other subjective measures, jobless lone parents and jobless couple parents have the lowest scores for mental well-being (49 and 57, respectively); working lone parents also have a relatively low score (59). There is no significant difference between the

<sup>15</sup> The WHO-5 mental well-being scale is composed of the following items, all measured on a six-point scale and referring to how the respondent felt over the previous two weeks: I have felt cheerful and in good spirits; I have felt calm and relaxed; I have felt active and vigorous; I woke up feeling fresh and rested; my daily life has been filled with things that interest me.

couple parents living in single-earner and dual-earner families (64 in dual-earner families; for single-earner families, 64 for the working partner and 62 for the stay-at-home partner).

However, mental well-being in the four country groups does not follow the pattern for other subjective measures. Jobless lone parents have a lower score for mental well-being in the most flexible country group than elsewhere (46), whereas working lone parents have the lowest scores in the most flexible group (56) and the mainly traditional group (55). In single-earner couple families, the stay-at-home partner has the lowest score for mental well-being in the most flexible group (59) (see Table A11 in Annex 3). This suggests that having a job is important for mental well-being even in countries where generous benefits are provided for jobless parents and where staying at home is often voluntary.

An interesting example of differences in well-being between different family members is found when comparing fathers and

mothers in different types of households. Overall, the EQLS did not record any significant differences between genders in most aspects of subjective well-being (Eurofound, 2012), and this remains true for parents on average. However, while there is no significant difference between men and women in coupled families where at least one parent works, women in jobless couple families are significantly happier (7.4 compared with 6.8), more satisfied with their life (6.7 and 6.0) and have higher scores for mental well-being (60 and 55) than men. A possible explanation is that, in many of these families, the father is actively looking for work (possibly having recently lost a job in a single-earner family), while the mother is caring for the children. Working lone mothers also have slightly higher scores for life satisfaction (6.8) than lone fathers (6.6). There is no significant difference in happiness (both 7.1) or optimism (both 50%), and lone mothers have slightly lower scores for mental well-being than lone fathers (58 against 61). However, this latter finding is in line with the average difference between mothers and fathers (61 and 64).

## Extended families: subjective and mental well-being

As these are subjective measures, it is important also to show how different individuals feel in the same type of family. One example is the significant difference in the levels of subjective and mental well-being between parents and grandparents in multigenerational households. However, it is important to take into account the effect of age when comparing parents and grandparents. For example, life satisfaction tends to increase with age in some of the countries in western Europe, while it decreases in central and eastern Europe. In the EU as a whole it shows a U-shaped trend (Eurofound,

2012). According to the grouping used in this analysis, life satisfaction, on average, increases with age in the most flexible group, shows a U-shaped trend in the mainly flexible group, and decreases in the mainly traditional group. In the most traditional group, it is high for the youngest age group and remains nearly unchanged for the older age categories. Mental well-being follows a similar pattern to life satisfaction. Happiness, on the other hand, decreases with age in all groups except the most flexible group, and optimism decreases everywhere.

**Table 16: Subjective and mental well-being for parents and grandparents in multigenerational households, 2007 and 2011**

	2007				2011			
	Life satisfaction	Happiness	Optimism	WHO-5 index	Life satisfaction	Happiness	Optimism	WHO-5 index
Parent in nuclear household	7.3	7.8	57%	63	7.4	7.8	56%	64
Parent in multigenerational household	6.4	7.3	57%	58	6.8	7.4	55%	61
Grandparent in multigenerational household	6.2	7.1	45%	53	6.5	6.8	42%	54

*Note: Red shading indicates lower levels of subjective and mental well-being; green shading indicates higher levels.*

Parents living with their own parents have lower levels of life satisfaction, happiness and mental well-being than parents living with just their children; however, both groups have similar levels of optimism. Grandparents living with their children's families have lower scores for subjective well-being than parents in such households. In particular, they have very low levels of optimism and mental well-being. Both these findings suggest that for many families, living together may not be a voluntary arrangement. Interestingly, for parents living in multigenerational families, ratings for all these subjective measures have improved since 2007, while for grandparents, life satisfaction has increased and happiness and optimism have decreased.

Despite the age differences described above in the general population, in 2011 grandparents in multigenerational families had lower subjective and mental well-being than parents in the mainly flexible, the mainly traditional and the most traditional groups. (As noted in the Annex, the most flexible group was excluded from the analysis due to the low sample size for multigenerational families.) The only difference between the groups is that in the most traditional group, life satisfaction for parents and grandparents is similar. (See regression analysis for life satisfaction controlling for the effect of age in Chapter 5.)

## CHAPTER 5

# Social exclusion

# Social exclusion

Social exclusion in the quality-of-life framework of the EQLS is a subjective indicator, measuring the feeling of being excluded

from society. It is measured by an index calculated from four variables on a scale of 1–5.

**Table 17: Perceived social exclusion by family type, 2007 and 2011**

	2007	2011
Lone parent, working	2.2	2.2
Lone parent, not working	2.8	2.9
Couple family, both working	2.0	2.0
Couple family, one working	if respondent works	2.1
	if respondent's partner works	2.3
Couple family, neither working	2.6	2.6
All parents	2.1	2.2

**Note:** Q29e I feel left out of society.

Q29f Life has become so complicated today that I almost can't find my way.

Q29g I feel that the value of what I do is not recognised by others.

Q29h Some people look down on me because of my job situation or income. Red shading indicates greater social exclusion; green shading, less exclusion.

The most noticeable finding is that there was very little change in social exclusion between 2007 and 2011. This is perhaps due to the strong relationship between the social exclusion measure and family status, as well as employment status: it is those people who are not working who felt excluded both before and after the crisis. This is demonstrated both by the high degree of exclusion felt by jobless lone parents and jobless couple families, and by the difference in exclusion felt by working partners and stay-at-home partners in single-earner families. The determinants of social exclusion are explored further below.

Overall, parents in the mainly traditional countries feel more socially excluded than in the other groups (a rating of 2.4 as against 2.0–2.2 in other groups), but parents living in jobless families everywhere experience the greatest exclusion. Jobless lone parents experience the greatest exclusion in the most flexible group of countries, but in all country groups experience more exclusion than is the average for people living with children.

## Extended families: social exclusion

An important finding for lone parents living with relatives is that they feel a high level of social exclusion (2.5 as against 2.2 for parents on average), despite living with others. Jobless lone parents living with relatives feel a similar level of exclusion as jobless lone parents living alone; they also experienced a significant increase in social exclusion since the crisis (a score of 2.4 in 2007, compared with a score of 2.8 in 2011). This is possibly due to joblessness and low income. No change was recorded for other parents.

Parents and grandparents in multigenerational households experience similar levels of social exclusion (2.4), which is slightly above average. When compared with people who do not live with children, lone parents and grandparents living with families experience the greatest social exclusion (despite living in a large family), and couples with children experience the least.

The finding that working lone parents experience average levels of social exclusion in all country groups suggests that social exclusion is more related to employment status than family status.

## Well-being and family status

The above sections on subjective well-being and social exclusion show that family status (being a lone parent as opposed to living with a partner, living with extended family or both parents and grandparents) matters significantly for well-being. But perhaps even more important is employment status (together with income). This section explores how much family status matters compared with economic circumstances for two measures: life satisfaction and social exclusion.

The first analysis looks at the relationship between family and other circumstances and life satisfaction. Life satisfaction is measured on a scale of 1 to 10. The numbers in Table 18 show how much each situation adds to, or removes from, the average life satisfaction score of the largest group in the sample of people living in households with children. These comparative groups are couple parents in nuclear family structures, employed people, and people living in households in the lowest income quartile.

The first column compares living in various family forms with couple families in terms of life satisfaction, after controlling for country, age and ill health (all of which have a confirmed strong relationship with life satisfaction – see Eurofound, 2012). Compared with couple parents, lone parents living alone and lone parents living with their own parents enjoy less life satisfaction. Even when age and ill health are controlled for, grandparents in multigenerational households have lower life satisfaction than parents. However, coupled parents living with their own parents (or in-laws) are not significantly different from coupled parents in nuclear families in terms of their satisfaction with life in general.

The second column introduces employment status to the model. When controlling for employment status, the same groups still feel less satisfied with their life than do coupled parents. It is also notable that homemakers enjoy less life satisfaction than those who are employed; the same applies to those who are unemployed and those unable to work.

**Table 18: Life satisfaction**

	Family composition	After controlling for employment status	After controlling for employment status and income
<b>Proportion of difference explained (%)</b>	15%	18%	20%
<b>1. Family composition (ref = Couple family)</b>			
Lone parent	-0.9	-0.8	-0.7
Lone parent in multigenerational household	-1.0	-0.8	-0.8
Couple family in multigenerational household	not significant	not significant	not significant
Grandparent in multigenerational household	-0.4	-0.3	not significant
<b>2. Employment status (ref = Employed)</b>			
Unemployed		-1.0	-0.7
Unable to work (due to ill health/disability)		-0.7	-0.5
Retired		not significant	not significant
Home-maker		-0.3	not significant
Student		not significant	not significant
Other employment status		-0.5	-0.3
<b>3. Income (ref = Lowest quartile)</b>			
Second quartile			0.4
Third quartile			0.6
Highest quartile			0.9

**Note:** Controls for country, age, and ill health are included in all models.

Red shading indicates that a life circumstance subtracts from the life satisfaction score (hence reducing life satisfaction); green indicates that it increases life satisfaction.

When income is introduced (in the third column), the first finding to emerge is that a higher relative income is strongly related to greater life satisfaction. When income is controlled for, it seems that the deteriorating effect of being a lone parent reduces, but remains significant. This suggests that income and employment status play a large role in the diminished life satisfaction of lone parents, but other (social) factors are also at play. Importantly, the reduced life satisfaction of lone parents living with their extended

family remains, suggesting that while family may provide some protection in terms of income, this is not enough to improve subjective well-being.

The deteriorating effect of being a grandparent living with one’s children’s families disappears after income is controlled for, suggesting that families provide support for older people as long as this living arrangement is voluntary, rather than a necessity due to lower incomes.

**Table 19: Social exclusion**

	Family composition	After controlling for employment status	After controlling for employment status and income
Proportion of difference explained (%)	16	19	21
<b>1. Family composition (ref = Coupled parent)</b>			
Lone parent	0.2	0.2	0.1
Lone parent in multigenerational household	0.2	0.2	not significant
Coupled parent in multigenerational household	not significant	not significant	not significant
Grandparent in multigenerational household	not significant	not significant	not significant
<b>2. Employment status (ref = Employed)</b>			
Unemployed		0.4	0.3
Unable to work (due to ill health/disability)		0.4	0.3
Retired		not significant	not significant
Homemaker		0.3	0.2
Student		0.3	0.2
Other employment status		0.2	0.2
<b>3. Income (ref = Lowest quartile)</b>			
Second quartile			-0.2
Third quartile			-0.3
Highest quartile			-0.5

*Note: controls for country, age, ill health and gender are included in all models. Red shading indicates that a life circumstance increases social exclusion; green indicates that it reduces social exclusion.*

Table 19 shows a similar analysis exploring the determinants of social exclusion. Social exclusion is measured on a scale of 1 to 5, a higher score indicating greater exclusion. The model controls for country, age, ill health and gender, all of which are associated with differences in social exclusion.

The analysis shows that being a lone parent – whether living alone with one’s children or living with one’s own parents – is still associated with greater social exclusion after

the employment situation is controlled for. After income is controlled for, lone parents living in multigenerational households no longer differ from couple parents. Living with an extended family is not associated with greater social exclusion for either couple parents or grandparents, once country, age and ill health are controlled for. Importantly, homemakers in families with children are at greater risk of social exclusion even when income and family status are controlled for.



## CHAPTER 6

# Conclusions

# Conclusions

## Main findings

This report sets out to examine the quality of life of different types of families with children in the context of the economic crisis, using results from the 2007 and 2011 European Quality of Life Survey. The main findings are summarised below according to three types of families: lone parents, coupled parents and extended families (including multigenerational families).

### Lone parents

Most lone parents work, and of those working, most work full time. The proportion of working lone parents has changed little since 2007 in the EU28 overall, but in the most traditional group of countries, the proportion of working lone parents has decreased. Many of these countries have been affected by the crisis more profoundly than others, which may be the reason for the increase in lone parents who are out of work.

Lone mothers, whether they work full time or part time, work fewer hours than their male counterparts. Lone mothers are also more likely to feel their job is insecure than lone fathers.

Working lone parents are in a better position than unemployed or inactive lone parents in most quality-of-life measures. However, they work fewer hours per week than coupled parents. Single parents who work part time are at greater risk of losing their job than those who work full time and at greater risk of poverty than full-time workers and families with multiple earners.

Most lone mothers would be willing to work if given the opportunity to choose their working hours, with over 50% of inactive lone mothers expressing a preference to work part time. Most lone mothers in full-time work would prefer to work less, but most of those working part time would like to increase their working hours.

Lone parents working full time are the most likely to experience work–life conflict, and the proportion experiencing high levels of conflict has increased significantly since 2007, at a far greater rate than for coupled parents. Lone parents

also often have difficulties accessing childcare, especially because of its cost.

Lone parents, in general, are feeling increasing financial strain since 2007 as demonstrated by increases in difficulties making ends meet, inability to pay bills and feelings of housing insecurity. Jobless lone parents are significantly more likely to face financial difficulties than working lone parents. This is true in all groups of countries, but is especially pronounced in the most traditional and the mainly traditional countries.

The rate of jobless lone parents facing high levels of deprivation has increased significantly since 2007. The most flexible countries (most of which are the highest-income countries in Europe) have the lowest average levels of deprivation in Europe; nonetheless, jobless lone parents are still facing very high levels of deprivation in these countries, despite the generous benefits that characterise these countries.

Employment plays a key role in the subjective well-being of lone parents. Jobless lone parents who live alone with their children have the lowest ratings for life satisfaction and happiness and the greatest risk of feeling social exclusion.

While no change was recorded for families overall in terms of life satisfaction and happiness between 2007 and 2011, ratings for both for jobless lone parents have fallen since 2007. This drop was largest in the most flexible group of countries.

Having a job is significant for the mental well-being of lone parents, even in those countries where generous benefits are provided for jobless parents and where staying at home is often voluntary. In fact, jobless lone parents in the most flexible group of countries also have lower scores for mental well-being than in other countries.

Social exclusion among jobless lone parents is greatest in the most flexible group of countries, but in all groups jobless lone parents are more excluded than any other parents.

However, working lone parents are more optimistic in the most flexible group than in the other three groups: in these countries they experienced no decrease in optimism since 2007, while in all three other groups the decrease has been significant.

When income is controlled for, the deteriorating effect of being a lone parent reduces, but remains significant. This suggests that while income and employment status play a large role in the diminished life satisfaction of lone parents, other (social) factors are also at play.

When living with extended family (their parents, for instance), lone parents have slightly better outcomes in terms of income and deprivation, but they continue to experience low levels of subjective well-being and high levels of social exclusion. In addition, the decreased life satisfaction felt by lone parents when they live with extended families – which persists even after employment status and income are controlled for – suggests that while family may provide some protection in terms of income, it is not enough to improve subjective well-being.

## Two-parent households

Dual-earner families make up the largest proportion of families overall, but often one parent – nearly always the female partner – works part time (especially in the most flexible countries). These families are in the best position in terms of making ends meet, paying bills and housing security and they have a low risk of deprivation, with no significant worsening on average since the start of crisis; this means that material deterioration has been felt mainly by families already in a vulnerable situation. Dual-earner families also have the highest life satisfaction and happiness, as well as a relatively low rate of work–life balance issues, perhaps as these issues are more evenly shared.

Single-earner couple families are also very common in Europe, especially in the most traditional country group. Alongside lone parents, single-earner couple families have suffered the consequences of the crisis, being more likely to find it difficult to make ends meet in 2011 than in 2007; they have also experienced a significant increase in deprivation.

In nearly four-fifths of single-earner families, the father is the sole breadwinner. In those single-earner families where the mother is the breadwinner, she works fewer hours on average than male breadwinners and fewer than lone mothers. In 11% of single-earner families, the only earning partner works part time; such families are at particular risk of poverty.

Nearly all unemployed or inactive mothers and fathers would like to work if they could choose their working hours, with over 50% of inactive mothers expressing a preference for working part time. Most mothers in full-time work would prefer to work less. In single-earner families, the stay-at-home partner has poorer mental well-being than the working partner, especially

in the most flexible countries, where dual-earner families are the most common.

In the most traditional group, the earning partner enjoys significantly greater life satisfaction and happiness than the stay-at-home partner. In contrast, among single-earner couple families in the most flexible group the stay-at-home partner has higher life satisfaction and happiness, whereas there is no significant difference between partners according to employment status in the other two groups.

Conflicts of work and family have increased for couple families since 2007, both in terms of the frequency of severe conflict (problems both at work and at home) and moderate conflict (problems either at home or at work).

Jobless couple families are the most likely to have difficulties making ends meet (more often than jobless lone parents) and they also have a high rate of deprivation. Jobless families overall were significantly more likely to be facing financial difficulties and deprivation in 2011 than in 2007. Jobless lone parents are facing difficulties making ends meet everywhere, but the rate is higher in the most traditional countries and in the mainly traditional countries.

More families ran into arrears in 2011 than in 2007: families in general were more likely to have difficulties paying accommodation (rent or mortgage) and utility bills. Jobless families are most at risk of debt, but over 20% of single-earner couple families also run out of money to pay for utilities. Informal loans from friends and families are one of the ways for families to cover their debts, but many families (especially if they are jobless) have difficulties in repaying these.

Jobless couple families are facing significant difficulties on all measures; these have worsened since the start of the crisis. While life satisfaction and happiness has not changed significantly in the overall EU28 population since 2007, the life satisfaction and happiness of parents in jobless households has significantly decreased.

While there is no significant difference between men and women in coupled families where at least one parent works, women in jobless couple families are significantly happier than men (7.4 as against 6.8). They are also more satisfied with their life (6.7 as against 6.0) and have a higher score for mental well-being (60 as against 55).

Overall, parents in the mainly traditional countries suffer greater social exclusion than in the other groups of countries, but parents in jobless families everywhere suffer the worst exclusion.

## Extended families

In this report, extended families includes parents living with their children and their parents or other relatives, and grandparents living with their children's families.

Families in which three or more adults live together with children experience relatively little deprivation and are more likely to be able to make ends meet than the most disadvantaged families. However, in 2011 more extended families were recorded than in 2007, suggesting that economic strain, as well as increased housing insecurity, is one reason for choosing to live together.

Nearly 33% of lone parents living with relatives are unemployed. However, while lone parents were more likely to be employed in 2011 than in 2007 (64% compared with 60%), those living with relatives are less likely to be employed than those who live with their children (40% as against 48%), which again suggests that lone parents who lost their job may have had to move in with their families. This suggests that living with extended family might not be a voluntary arrangement, but a necessity due to unemployment.

Lone parents living with relatives are in a better economic situation than other lone parents, despite being less likely to work. If working, they are less likely to have work-life balance issues and problems with childcare. However, despite the fact that they live with others, lone parents living with relatives feel a high level of social exclusion (especially if they are out of work) and they have the lowest levels of subjective well-being, both of which remain after income and employment status are controlled for.

On average, couple parents who live with other relatives enjoy higher levels of subjective well-being, perhaps due to the help that is given with raising children. However, low levels of subjective well-being were recorded for grandparents living with their children's family. This difference remains after age is controlled for, but disappears after income is controlled for; this suggests that – for many families – living together is a necessity due to financial problems, rather than a choice.

The deteriorating effect of being a grandparent living with one's child's family disappears after income is controlled for, suggesting that the family structure provides support for older people as long as this living arrangement is voluntary, rather than a necessity due to reduced income.

## Policy pointers

In nearly all EU countries, financial strain and deprivation is increasing for families. This report concludes that families, especially single-parent or jobless families, are more likely to be poor today than before the economic recession hit. Poverty and deprivation are problematic not only from a social-justice perspective, but may also inhibit future social mobility due to inefficient personal choices: in a recent article in *Science* Mani et al (2013) argue that financial worries reduce cognitive functioning, and make decision-making less insightful and less forward-thinking. This may further perpetuate poverty.

- Family support policies are needed that protect the most vulnerable types of families. Benefits need to be well designed to maintain work incentives, but they need to be effective in protecting the most vulnerable, otherwise the risk is run of creating high, long-term social costs for future generations.
- In addition to cash benefits, alternative means of support are also essential. These include personal counselling for job seekers, training, and devising long-term personal strategies for escaping deprivation.
- Policy interventions should equally focus on the position of children living in these families. Low levels of parental well-being and financial security are likely to directly impact on children.

The report highlights how, in periods of rapid social and economic change and of growing unemployment, the measurement of the quality of life becomes of even greater relevance. Measuring the quality of life can provide additional information about who is doing well or badly in life, with subjective well-being indicators particularly useful when deciding how to allocate or prioritise scarce resources. The information from the quality-of-life indicators can clearly help in monitoring and mapping the experiences of people in different social groups, and it can also contribute to informing policy design and policy appraisal. Indicators of subjective well-being show that lack of employment reduces both life satisfaction and happiness. They also highlight the importance of relationships and social support over and above income.

- Targeted actions are needed to help lone parents into work since, even in the most flexible countries with their adequate benefits, families in which nobody works face high levels of deprivation.
- Getting people who have recently been made redundant back into work as soon as possible must be a policy priority to avoid the risk of entrenched disadvantage.

- Measures are needed that offer flexible working hours: the majority of lone mothers (and coupled mothers) would be willing to work if given the opportunity to choose their working hours (over 50% of inactive mothers would opt for part-time work, for instance) and most mothers in full-time work would prefer to work less.
- Work should pay for both parents, including in terms of assistance with childcare costs.
- Increasing social cohesion, social integration and social cooperation should be high on the policy agenda, since these critically influence how individuals are affected by the new social risks and how individuals, their communities and countries recover and achieve economic prosperity in the future.

The economic and social crisis has affected the demographic situation, creating a 'baby recession'. A reduction of birth rates has obvious implications for future labour supply as well as for the financial sustainability of social-protection systems. The crisis is also reflected in the changing family composition in some countries, with an increasing share of multigenerational households. In this situation, family-support policies are of crucial importance: this includes policies for cash support, for ensuring

the availability of affordable childcare facilities, and for boosting the flexibility of labour markets. However, some governments have reacted to the crisis by curbing spending on families.

Special attention needs to be paid to the situation of families, providing an efficient policy mix that reflects their needs.

A suitable balance of work and family life is of critical importance, since increased stress levels have contributed to the break-up of families and an increasing number of lone parents. If parents cannot achieve their desired work-family balance, their subjective well-being will deteriorate; this may in turn reduce their participation in the labour market, which would affect societal material well-being. As parenting is crucial in children's development, policymakers have many reasons to want to help parents find a better work-family balance.

- Measures are needed that help families combine work and care commitments, through an integrated set of leave, care and workplace support for parents of young children.
- Parental leave systems are needed that encourage more fathers to take and share leave and that promote their engagement with domestic responsibilities.

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# Annex 1: Methodology

## Sample definitions

The EQLS is a sample of individuals aged 18 and over living in private households. According to the EQLS definition, a household 'comprises one person living alone or a group of people living at the same address in a non-institutional dwelling, who have that address as their only or main residence, and who either share at least one main meal a day or share the living accommodation (or both)'.

For the third EQLS, fielded in 2011 and 2012 in the EU28 (as well as a number of other European countries), over 35,000 people were surveyed. This report presents the situation of 9,600 respondents – or 26% of the total sample – who live in a family household with (dependent) children.<sup>16</sup> At least one of these children was under 18 years of age or still in education.<sup>17</sup> In total, these families had 16,800 children in their households, of whom 14,200 were under 18.

## Statistical analyses

The statistical analyses of EQLS data that were carried out as part of this study used SPSS statistical software. The descriptions below explain the principles behind these analyses.

Descriptive analyses were carried out to compare the different types of European families, different country groups and changes over time. For this, cross-tabulations and comparison of means were used. The chi-square statistic is used to identify statistically significant differences between categories. The comparison of means statistic is used to compare the average value of a variable (for example, life satisfaction or income) between different groups of respondents – for example, by family type or country group. To assess whether the means of two groups are statistically

different from each other, a t-test is carried out. This tests the difference between their means, relative to the spread or variability of their scores and is used in this report in many cases when establishing that two averages are statistically different from each other. T-tests are *bivariate*: they ignore the effect of other variables that might be important in explaining a difference.

Multivariate regression analysis was used to assess to what extent a list of different sociodemographic variables explains variations in the life satisfaction of the different types of European families. Multivariate regression analysis examines the separate effects of a number of independent variables on a single dependent variable (for the purposes of this report, this was usually one of the measures of subjective well-being) to identify the factors that are statistically related (controlling for the effects of the other variables) and to compare their relative strength.

In addition to indicating the predictive value of the overall model, regression analysis indicates how well each independent variable predicts the dependent variable, controlling for each of the other independent variables. These are shown by the size of the B and beta coefficients – either non-standardised or standardised (see standardising scores). The larger the coefficient, the stronger the effect of the independent variable in predicting the dependent variable.

For all cross-country analyses, *w5\_EU28* was used to weigh the results. This weighting variable combines the within-country design weights with a weighting so that all data from each country are weighted according to the size of the country (so data from Germany are weighted higher than data from Luxembourg).

<sup>16</sup> Only those children/dependents are counted who are children or stepchildren of the respondent and live in the household. Children living in institution households are excluded.

<sup>17</sup> The EQLS does not distinguish between children who live in the household full time and children whose care is shared between two parents.



# Annex 2: Selection of country groups

A recent review of existing family-policy typologies served as the starting point for the selection of country groups, as it examines existing typologies up until 2010 and provides information about the extent to which these typologies were still fitting, in light of changes in public family policies. It also specifically examines the position of the central and eastern European countries (Blum, 2011).<sup>18</sup>

The review shows that the greatest overlap between all the existing typologies was achieved from a geographical classification with the following groups:

- the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland and Sweden);
- the continental/conservative countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands);
- the Anglo-Saxon/liberal countries (Ireland, Malta and the UK);
- the southern European/ Mediterranean countries (Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain).

The central and eastern European countries (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) were generally placed into a single post-socialist group.

Gauthier (2010) assessed family policies across Europe by asking welfare-state researchers from the then EU27 Member States in early 2010 to list the three most important family-policy issues on the political agenda and to find out whether policies have moved predominantly towards de-familialisation or re-familialisation, or a mixture of both.

In matching the developments with the 'best-fit' geographical classification, Blum (2011) found the the greatest overlap for the Nordic and the Mediterranean groups: family-policy trends in these countries were most often within the de-familialisation and re-familialisation dichotomy, respectively, although at country level the trend was not always as evident. The picture for the continental group was less clear, though in most of the countries, mixed trends in family policy were reported. In terms of the central and eastern European countries, family policies in Latvia and Hungary were seen to be moving towards de-familialisation. Estonia, Poland, the Czech Republic and Romania had mixed developments, while Bulgaria, Lithuania, Slovakia and Slovenia were seen to be moving in a refamilialisation direction. The overriding conclusion for these countries, however, was that they were too diverse and still too immersed in a transitional period of reform to fit properly into the traditional 'three worlds of welfare capitalism' groups or the geographical groupings (Blum, 2011).

The second step in the development process was to compare Blum's review with Gauthier's (2010) analysis of the impact of the economic crisis on family policies in the EU. The aim was to check whether this would offer further information about policy developments, not only in the central and eastern European countries but across the Member States. This exercise was particularly relevant because of the distinction between structural changes and responses to the crisis and between short-term and long-term change. In the analysis of the impact of the economic crisis on family policies, Gauthier makes a number of points.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Country groups used in an earlier Eurofound study on family life and work were also considered in the assessment (Eurofound, 2010).

<sup>19</sup> Gauthier (2010) asked EU network experts on family policies to report on the changes to their country's family policy since October 2008. Some 22 experts filled in the questionnaire. Responses were not received from Denmark, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal and Spain; in some cases, Gauthier drew information from other sources. The report summarises the situation as of November 2009.

**Structural changes:** In 21 countries, structural changes had been implemented since October 2008 that expanded the level of support for families. At the same time Hungary and the Netherlands also introduced structural changes that reduced the level of support for families (see Table A1).

**Government measures in response to crisis:** With regard to measures that were explicitly introduced by governments in response to the economic crisis, measures – mostly in the form of cash benefits and measures related to childcare or housing costs – had been introduced in 13 countries that increased the level of support for families. At the same time, negative measures introduced in response to the crisis were reported in eight countries. Those countries that cut programmes most severely were those identified as having been affected very profoundly by the crisis: Estonia, Hungary, Latvia and Lithuania. Two groups of countries stand out: countries such as France, Italy and the United Kingdom adopted numerous temporary relief measures for families, and countries such as Estonia, Hungary and Latvia introduced specific responses to the crisis that reduced the level of support for families.

The comparison of the work carried out by Blum and Gauthier shows that, due to different responses to the crisis, the position of several countries needs further consideration. Guided by Gauthier's definitions of family policies, EPIC country profiles have been consulted to evaluate each country's position – especially that of the countries with negative developments as noted above – in order to arrive at a final classification of family-policy country groupings for the study at hand. EPIC provides a detailed and up-to-date description of a broad range of family and child-orientated policies in each country, reflecting the current situation in each country as of 2013. The following factors were included in the assessment:

- leave policies (maternity, paternity and parental leave);
- family allowances;
- work-life balance policies (childcare availability, part-time work and long-term care);
- policies for large families.

Apart from the above-mentioned literature and policy sources, the following macro-level statistics were included in the assessment:

- the female employment rate;
- the proportion of children under the age of three enrolled in formal childcare;
- family benefits as a proportion of all benefits.

Furthermore, rather than using the degree to which family responsibilities are *relaxed* (the 'de-familialisation' – 're-familialisation' scale) as the spectrum, the assessment considers the extent to which countries have *flexible* family policies. This is a slightly different approach in that countries are assessed according to the extent to which policies make it possible to move away from the traditional 'breadwinner' model where the mother stays at home to look after the children, towards more flexible patterns. Again, this is not an 'either or' dichotomy but rather a spectrum, which spans from those countries that are fully traditional in their approach to those that offer great flexibility. Those in between are classified as having mixed policies, or being 'mainly' traditional or 'mainly' flexible.

In light of the discussions on how to deal with the 'post-socialist' countries, these countries have each been assessed on their policies rather than treating them as a single entity. This has resulted in many of these countries falling into the mixed/'mainly' groups. The explanation for this is the transitional nature of the policies and the effects of the recession.<sup>20</sup>

As in the case of the Blum typology, the greatest overlap between the region and the flexibility-type grouping was found for the Nordic and the Mediterranean groups. All the Nordic countries are in the most flexible group and many of the Mediterranean countries are classified as 'traditional (family-orientated)'. While there is thus a lot of overlap with the de-familialisation/re-familialisation classification, there are some notable differences.

<sup>20</sup> At this final stage of the process, a 2011 typology (Thévenon, 2011) was examined to verify the validity of the proposed country groupings. The country groupings in this typology confirm the decision to separate the post-socialist mixed countries from the other countries in the mixed group. The stages in the development process are presented in Table A1.

Table A1: Stages in the development of country groups

	EQLS 2007 Work-family reconciliation regimes	Blum review	Blum de- and re-familialisation	Gauthier (2010)			Blum/Gauthier	EPIC	Thévenon, 2011	Final proposal
				Structural changes	Positive response to crisis	Negative response to crisis				
<b>AT</b>	German-speaking	Continental	Mix	+			Mix	Mixed	Continental Europe	Mix, mostly flexible
<b>BE</b>	Benelux/France	Continental	De-familialisation	+			De-familialisation	Flexible	Continental Europe	Most flexible
<b>BG</b>	Residual	Post-socialist	Re-familialisation	+			Re-familialisation	Traditional	N/A	Most traditional
<b>CY</b>	Southern	Mediterranean	Mix	+	Increased funding to childcare services		Mix	Mixed	N/A	Mix, mostly flexible
<b>CZ</b>	Former-socialist	Post-socialist	Mix	+	Increase in amount of child allowance and extended eligibility	Reduction in leave allowances	Mix	Mixed	Eastern Europe	Mix, mostly traditional
<b>DE</b>	German-speaking	Continental	Mix	+	€100 one-off payment		Mix	Mixed	Continental Europe	Mix, mostly flexible
<b>DK</b>	Nordic	Nordic	De-familialisation	No information			De-familialisation	Flexible	Nordic	Most flexible
<b>EE</b>	Former-socialist	Post-socialist	Mix	+		Reduced level of support	<b>Down</b>	Traditional	N/A	Most traditional
<b>EL</b>	Southern	Mediterranean	Mix	+			Mix	Traditional	Southern Europe	Most traditional
<b>ES</b>	Southern	Mediterranean	Re-familialisation	No information			Re-familialisation	Traditional	Southern Europe	Most traditional
<b>FI</b>	Nordic	Nordic	De-familialisation	+		Cuts in local authority child care spending	De-familialisation	Flexible	Nordic	Most flexible

	EQLS 2007 Work-family reconciliation regimes	Blum review	Blum de- and re-familialisation	Gauthier (2010)			Blum/Gauthier	EPIC	Thévenon, 2011	Final proposal
				Structural changes	Positive response to crisis	Negative response to crisis				
<b>FR</b>	Benelux/France	Continental	Mix		Temporary relief measures for families		Mix	Mixed	Continental Europe	Mix, mostly flexible
<b>HR</b>	Residual	N/A	N/A	No information	No information	No information	N/A	No information	N/A	Most traditional
<b>HU</b>	Former-socialist	Post-Socialist	De-familialisation	+/-	One-off cash benefit for low-income families	Reduced level of support	<b>Down</b>	Mixed	Eastern Europe	Mix, mostly traditional
<b>IE</b>	Anglo-Saxon	Anglo-American	De-familialisation	+	Free pre-school year of early childhood education and care ECEC	Child benefit reduced to 18 years	<b>Down</b>	Mixed	Anglo-Saxon Countries	Mix, mostly flexible
<b>IT</b>	Southern	Mediterranean	Re-familialisation	+	Extensive package		Re-familialisation	Traditional	Southern Europe	Most traditional
<b>LT</b>	Former-socialist	Post-socialist	Re-familialisation	No information	Benefits for children under three years of age extended to cover all children, irrespective of income	Reduction in leave allowances	Re-familialisation	Traditional	N/A	Most traditional
<b>LU</b>	Benelux/France	Continental	Mix	No information	New service voucher for children aged up to 12 years		Mix	Mixed	Continental Europe	Mix, mostly flexible

	EQLS 2007 Work-family reconciliation regimes	Blum review	Blum de- and re-familialisation	Gauthier (2010)			Blum/Gauthier	EPIC	Thévenon, 2011	Final proposal
				Structural changes	Positive response to crisis	Negative response to crisis				
<b>LV</b>	Former-Socialist	Post-socialist	De-familialisation	+		Reduced level of support	Down	Mixed	N/A	Mix, mostly traditional
<b>MT</b>	Southern	Anglo-American	Re-familialisation	+			Re-familialisation	Mixed	N/A	Mix, mostly flexible
<b>NL</b>	Benelux/France	Continental	Mix	+/-		Cuts in child-related budget	Mix	Flexible	Continental Europe	Most flexible
<b>PL</b>	Former-Socialist	Post-socialist	Mix	+		Temporary mortgage relief payments	Mix	Mixed	Eastern Europe	Mix, mostly traditional
<b>PT</b>	Southern	Mediterranean	Mix	No information			Mix	Mixed	Southern Europe	Mix, mostly flexible
<b>RO</b>	Residual	Post-socialist	Mix	+		'First house' measure	Mix	Mixed	N/A	Mix, mostly flexible
<b>SE</b>	Nordic	Nordic	De-familialisation	+			De-familialisation	Flexible	Nordic	Most flexible
<b>SI</b>	Former-Socialist	Post-socialist	Re-familialisation	+		New housing loans	Re-familialisation	Mixed	N/A	Mix, mostly flexible
<b>SK</b>	Former-Socialist	Post-socialist	De-familialisation	+			De-familialisation	Mixed	Eastern Europe	Mix, mostly traditional
<b>UK</b>	Anglo-Saxon	Anglo-American	De-familialisation	+		Extensive package	De-familialisation	Flexible	Anglo-Saxon Countries	Most flexible

Table A2: Receipt of child benefits, including alimony, by family type and country group (%)

	2007					2011				
	Most flexible	Mixed, mainly flexible	Mixed, mainly traditional	Most traditional (family-orientated)	All EU28 countries	Most flexible	Mixed, mainly flexible	Mixed, mainly traditional	Most traditional (family-orientated)	All EU28 countries
Lone parent, working	87	83	57	29	71	79	77	52	26	64.1
Lone parent, not working	93	86	62	27	83.4	89	81	83	48	80
Couple parents, both working	87	73	43	9	56	83	66	35	8	51
Couple parents, one working	89	81	37	9	49	91	78	41	9	48
Couple parents, neither working	89	82	58	10	58	99	79	67	19	57
All parents	88	76	44	11	55	85	71	42	13	52

# Annex 3: Additional tables

**Table A3: Deprivation levels by country group, 2007 and 2011 (%)**

	2007												2011																						
	Most flexible			Mixed, mainly flexible			Mixed, mainly traditional			Most traditional (family-oriented)			Total			Most flexible			Mixed, mainly flexible			Mixed, mainly traditional			Most traditional (family-oriented)			Total							
	No	Low	High	No	Low	High	No	Low	High	No	Low	High	No	Low	High	No	Low	High	No	Low	High	No	Low	High	No	Low	High	No	Low	High					
Lone parent, working	52	30	18	44	30	26	16	34	50	41	17	42	32	26	23	52	26	22	19	27	54	41	37	22	43	31	27	54	41	37	22	43	31	27	
Lone parent, not working	23	44	33	24	29	47	12	17	71	21	62	22	34	44	5	16	31	53	9	13	78	14	17	69	11	27	63	11	27	63	11	27	63	11	27
Lone parent, with relatives	66	16	18	31	41	28	28	19	54	30	37	37	25	38	49	27	39	34	18	25	58	31	29	40	28	27	45	28	27	45	28	27	45	28	27
Couple parents, both working	85	11	4	70	22	8	44	28	27	15	12	69	19	12	74	7	20	9	45	24	31	61	24	16	65	21	13	65	21	13	65	21	13	65	21
Couple parents, one working	72	23	6	59	27	15	26	31	43	26	16	56	27	18	51	19	30	14	29	26	45	42	36	22	46	32	22	46	32	22	46	32	22	46	32
Couple parents, neither working	34	26	40	37	23	40	10	33	57	35	27	31	29	39	25	27	26	47	7	13	80	12	31	57	17	26	57	17	26	57	17	26	57	17	26
Couple parents, with relatives, multiple earners	51	23	27	54	33	13	39	32	28	14	24	50	25	24	91	0	24	14	39	28	34	45	37	17	49	28	23	49	28	23	49	28	23	49	28
Couple parents, with relatives, one earner or none	45	55	0	44	35	21	19	31	51	23	38	33	32	35	23	40	26	30	25	22	53	26	35	40	27	27	46	27	27	46	27	27	46	27	27
All parents	73	18	9	63	24	13	35	29	35	21	16	60	23	17	59	24	24	14	35	24	41	47	30	23	52	26	22	52	26	22	52	26	22	52	26



Table A4: Arrears by country group, family type and employment status, 2007 and 2011 (%)

	2007					2011				
	Most flexible	Mixed, mainly flexible	Mixed, mainly traditional	Most traditional (family-oriented)	Total	Most flexible	Mixed, mainly flexible	Mixed, mainly traditional	Most traditional (family-oriented)	Total
Lone parent, working	No arrears	73	82	56	83	75	74	62	64	71
	Rent or mortgage	21	12	31	12	18	12	18	20	17
	Utility bills	20	14	37	10	19	18	19	25	21
	Consumer loans						14	14	12	15
	Informal loans						10	11	12	12
All						4	7	3	9	6
Lone parent, not working	No arrears	67	72	48	60	67	42	37	51	46
	Rent or mortgage	16	15	40	8	18	32	23	41	29
	Utility bills	28	22	51	37	29	44	36	58	42
	Consumer loans						26	19	16	20
	Informal loans						21	18	25	18
All						10	6	10	1	7
Lone parent, with relatives	No arrears	79	88	63	54	66		71	59	64
	Rent or mortgage	0	10	9	20	11		11	24	15
	Utility bills	21	11	38	42	33		17	33	28
	Consumer loans							14	25	19
	Informal loans								13	16
All								0	11	6
Couple parents, both working	No arrears	94	89	83	86	88	89	85	77	82
	Rent or mortgage	5	9	10	10	8	6	11	13	11
	Utility bills	5	9	14	13	10	7	12	17	14
	Consumer loans						7	10	11	11
	Informal loans						4	7	7	8
All						3	6	4	10	6

Table A4: Arrears by country group, family type and employment status, 2007 and 2011 (%), continued

	2007					2011					
	Most flexible	Mixed, mainly flexible	Mixed, mainly traditional	Most traditional (family-oriented)	Total	Most flexible	Mixed, mainly flexible	Mixed, mainly traditional	Most traditional (family-oriented)	Total	
Couple parents, one working	No arrears	87	85	75	78	81	77	79	64	71	74
	Rent or mortgage	8	11	16	13	12	15	14	22	15	16
	Utility bills	12	13	25	20	17	14	15	30	25	21
	Consumer loans						12	12	19	15	14
	Informal loans						8	9	15	10	10
All						4	5	6	7	6	
Couple parents, neither working	No arrears	62	80	52	65	66	52	47	39	45	46
	Rent or mortgage	24	12	34	24	22	26	34	34	31	31
	Utility bills	30	18	41	30	29	26	34	54	42	39
	Consumer loans						31	29	35	18	26
	Informal loans						10	25	31	18	20
All						4	9	15	7	8	
Couple parents, with relatives, multiple earners	No arrears	67	88	82	79	80		85	83	79	83
	Rent or mortgage	0	12	4	9	7		15	6	10	8
	Utility bills	33	12	18	15	18		14	15	18	15
	Consumer loans							9	10	14	11
	Informal loans							14	4	10	7
All							8	2	4	4	
Couple parents, with relatives, one earner or none	No arrears	68	76	67	77	72		64	64	63	65
	Rent or mortgage	10	7	14	4	9		27	20	14	18
	Utility bills	32	17	29	21	25		35	23	27	25
	Consumer loans							22	17	18	17
	Informal loans							19	10	14	12
All							19	5	5	7	

	2007					2011				
	Most flexible	Mixed, mainly flexible	Mixed, mainly traditional	Most traditional (family-oriented)	Total	Most flexible	Mixed, mainly flexible	Mixed, mainly traditional	Most traditional (family-oriented)	Total
<b>No arrears</b>	87	87	77	81	<b>83</b>	80	80	70	70	<b>75</b>
<b>Rent or mortgage</b>	8	10	14	11	<b>11</b>	11	14	17	17	<b>15</b>
<b>Utility bills</b>	11	11	21	17	<b>14</b>	13	15	24	24	<b>19</b>
<b>Consumer loans</b>						11	12	15	15	<b>13</b>
<b>Informal loans</b>						7	9	11	12	<b>10</b>
<b>All</b>						4	6	5	8	<b>6</b>

Table A5: Working hour preferences by country group, family type and employment status, 2011 (%)

	Most flexible										Mixed, mainly flexible										Most traditional (family-oriented)									
	Respondent would prefer to work...										Respondent would prefer to work...										Respondent would prefer to work...									
	not at all	part time	full time	more hours	the same hours	fewer hours	not at all	part time	full time	more hours	the same hours	fewer hours	not at all	part time	full time	more hours	the same hours	fewer hours	not at all	part time	full time	more hours	the same hours	fewer hours						
<b>Lone parent</b>	Male*	8	13	79	8	40	53	8	5	87	7	38	55	0	11	89	6	35	59	0	5	95	1	37	62					
	Unemployed or inactive													0	3	97	0													
<b>Couple parent</b>	Male	2	68	31	17	34	49	1	34	66	26	38	35	1	20	79	16	48	36	1	36	64	13	39	48					
	Unemployed or inactive	14	62	25				10	53	37				3	23	73					0	34	66							
<b>Couple parent</b>	Male	0	20	80	11	48	41	1	11	88	15	42	43	4	9	87	12	43	45	2	15	84	8	43	50					
	Unemployed or inactive	6	17	77				19	13	69				8	13	79					9	13	78							
<b>Couple parent</b>	Female	2	68	30	16	48	37	1	48	51	16	47	37	3	26	71	12	48	40	2	50	48	16	36	48					
	Unemployed or inactive	21	61	18				15	62	23				7	24	69					8	51	41							

Note: \*Low sample size by country group.

**Table A6: Work–life conflict by country group, family type and employment status, 2007 and 2011 (%)**

	2007												2011																			
	Most flexible				Mixed, mainly flexible				Mixed, mainly traditional				Most traditional (family-oriented)				Most flexible				Mixed, mainly flexible				Mixed, mainly traditional				Most traditional (family-oriented)			
	None	Work or home	Work and home	None	None	Work or home	Work and home	None	None	Work or home	Work and home	None	None	Work or home	Work and home	None	None	Work or home	Work and home	None	None	Work or home	Work and home	None	None	Work or home	Work and home	None	None	Work or home	Work and home	
Lone parent working part-time	41	49	10	64	24	11	20	9	70	20	64	35	1	25	44	31	41	53	7	34	48	18	66	34	1							
Lone parent working full-time	31	55	13	52	41	7	33	44	23	44	43	13	26	55	19	34	46	20	24	43	34	23	53	24								
All lone parents	35	53	12	55	36	8	30	47	23	49	41	10	25	50	25	36	48	16	25	43	32	30	50	20								
Couple: both working full-time													41	44	15	42	45	13	38	40	22	34	50	16								
Couple: respondent full-time, partner part-time													46	43	11	40	47	14	27	50	23	38	52	10								
Couple: respondent part-time, partner full-time													46	39	15	58	34	8	44	45	11	52	39	9								
Couple: both working part-time													47	53	0	61	36	2	40	28	33	49	39	12								
Couple: respondent works full-time, partner does not work	46	48	6	57	35	7	31	54	15	39	43	18	39	49	12	46	40	13	27	40	34	33	45	22								
Couple: respondent works part-time, partner does not work	56	12	31	50	27	23	63	37	0	52	39	8	36	43	21	52	27	22	24	48	29	38	45	16								
All couple parents	48	42	10	57	35	9	33	53	14	41	43	17	43	43	13	46	42	12	36	41	23	37	48	16								

**Table A7: Difficulty with access to childcare services by country group, family type and employment status, 2007 and 2011 (%)**

	Most flexible						Mixed, mainly flexible						Mixed, mainly traditional						Most traditional (family-oriented)					
	Cost a problem	Availability a problem	Access a problem	Quality a problem	Difficulty with any	Difficulty with all	Cost a problem	Availability a problem	Access a problem	Quality a problem	Difficulty with any	Difficulty with all	Cost a problem	Availability a problem	Access a problem	Quality a problem	Difficulty with any	Difficulty with all	Cost a problem	Availability a problem	Access a problem	Quality a problem	Difficulty with any	Difficulty with all
Lone parents	66	55	38	27	79	29	67	48	27	84	38	65	60	55	49	76	51	59	63	42	34	68	34	36
Couple parents	56	45	31	21	70	21	61	41	23	77	18	62	60	52	35	78	39	65	54	41	33	75	36	
All parents	59	49	33	22	74	22	63	44	25	78	21	65	57	48	36	78	42	66	55	43	33	76	36	

Note: Green shading indicates better access; red shading, less access.

**Table A8: Life satisfaction and happiness by country group, family type and employment status, 2007 and 2011**

	2007												2011															
	Most flexible				Mixed, mainly flexible				Most traditional (family-oriented)				Most flexible				Mixed, mainly flexible				Mixed, mainly traditional				Most traditional (family-oriented)			
	Life satisfaction	Happiness	Life satisfaction	Happiness	Life satisfaction	Happiness	Life satisfaction	Happiness	Life satisfaction	Happiness	Life satisfaction	Happiness	Life satisfaction	Happiness	Life satisfaction	Happiness	Life satisfaction	Happiness	Life satisfaction	Happiness	Life satisfaction	Happiness	Life satisfaction	Happiness				
Lone parent, working	7.0	7.4	6.3	6.8	5.9	6.8	6.8	6.3	6.3	6.3	6.4	6.6	7.2	7.4	6.8	7.2	7.2	6.8	7.2	6.5	6.5	6.7	7.1	6.4				
Lone parent, not working	6.1	6.9	5.4	6.1	5.6	6.3	6.0	7.1	5.6	6.4	7.1	5.6	6.4	5.4	6.3	5.6	6.3	5.6	5.9	5.8	5.9	5.8	6.4	6.4				
Couple parents, both working	8.0	8.2	7.6	8.1	7.1	7.8	7.0	7.5	8.0	8.1	7.7	7.9	8.0	8.1	7.7	7.9	7.1	7.8	7.3	7.8	7.3	7.7	7.7	7.7				
Couple parents, one working	7.8	8.1	7.2	7.8	6.5	7.1	6.8	7.3	7.2	7.6	7.5	7.4	7.5	7.6	7.4	7.8	7.5	7.3	7.3	6.8	7.3	7.2	7.7	7.7				
Couple parents, neither working	7.1	7.5	6.5	7.4	6.1	7.3	6.5	7.5	7.1	7.7	7.4	7.5	7.1	7.7	7.4	7.9	7.0	7.4	6.7	7.0	6.7	6.9	7.5	7.5				
All parents	7.7	8.0	7.3	7.8	6.8	7.5	6.8	7.4	7.6	7.9	7.4	7.6	7.6	7.9	7.4	7.8	7.4	7.4	7.4	6.9	7.4	7.0	7.5	7.5				

Note: Green shading indicates greater life satisfaction and happiness; red shading, less.

**Table A9: Life satisfaction by income, country group and family type, 2011**

	Most flexible				Mixed, mainly flexible				Mixed, mainly traditional				Most traditional (family-oriented)				Total			
	Lowest quartile	2nd quartile	3rd quartile	Highest quartile	Lowest quartile	2nd quartile	3rd quartile	Highest quartile	Lowest quartile	2nd quartile	3rd quartile	Highest quartile	Lowest quartile	2nd quartile	3rd quartile	Highest quartile	Lowest quartile	2nd quartile	3rd quartile	Highest quartile
Lone parents	6.1	7.1	7.2	7.5	5.9	6.8	6.7	7.0	5.3	5.5	5.8	7.5	5.8	6.5	6.7	7.4	5.9	6.7	6.7	7.3
Couple parents	7.2	7.9	7.9	8.0	7.1	7.6	7.8	7.7	6.4	6.7	7.0	7.7	6.4	7.0	7.3	7.5	6.8	7.4	7.6	7.7
All parents	6.9	7.7	7.8	8.0	6.8	7.5	7.7	7.7	6.2	6.6	7.0	7.7	6.3	6.9	7.3	7.5	6.6	7.2	7.5	7.7

Note: Green shading indicates greater life satisfaction; red shading, lower.

**Table A10: Optimism by country group, family type and employment status, 2007 and 2011 (%)**

	2007				2011			
	Most flexible	Mixed, mainly flexible	Mixed, mainly traditional	Most traditional (family-orientated)	Most flexible	Mixed, mainly flexible	Mixed, mainly traditional	Most traditional (family-orientated)
Lone parent, working	60	56	50	56	61	47	42	44
Lone parent, not working	52	35	52	44	53	56	52	63
Couple parents, both working	72	54	63	52	68	57	56	45
Couple parents, one working	65	55	58	47	62	59	55	48
Couple parents, neither working	65	60	54	55	62	56	45	44
All parents	68	54	60	51	65	56	55	47

Note: Green shading indicates greater optimism; red shading, less.

Table A11: Mental well-being by country group, family type and employment status, 2007 and 2011

	2007					2011				
	Most flexible	Mixed, mainly flexible	Mixed, mainly traditional	Most traditional (family-oriented)	Total	Most flexible	Mixed, mainly flexible	Mixed, mainly traditional	Most traditional (family-oriented)	Total
Lone parent, working	61	62	58	60	60	56	61	55	61	59
Lone parent, not working	51	54	53	57	53	46	51	49	56	49
Couple parents, both working	65	65	62	61	63	63	65	63	66	64
Couple parents, one working if respondent works	62	65	61	64	64	62	66	62	66	64
Couple parents, one working if respondent's partner works	58	62	58	62	61	59	64	60	63	62
Couple parents, neither working	58	59	58	60	59	57	63	52	56	57
All parents	62	64	61	62	62	60	64	60	64	63

Table A12: Subjective and mental well-being in multigenerational households by country group and household type, 2007 and 2011

	2007												2011											
	Mixed, mainly flexible				Mixed, mainly traditional				Most traditional (family-oriented)				Mixed, mainly flexible				Mixed, mainly traditional				Most traditional (family-oriented)			
	Life satisfaction	Happiness	Optimism	WHO-5 index	Life satisfaction	Happiness	Optimism	WHO-5 index	Life satisfaction	Happiness	Optimism	WHO-5 index	Life satisfaction	Happiness	Optimism	WHO-5 index	Life satisfaction	Happiness	Optimism	WHO-5 index				
Parent in nuclear household	7.5	7.9	55%	64	6.9	7.6	61%	61	6.9	7.4	50%	62	7.5	7.9	58%	65	7.0	7.6	55%	61	7.1	7.6	46%	65
Parent in multi-generational household	6.5	7.7	45%	58	6.4	7.5	55%	59	6.1	7.1	56%	60	6.8	7.3	53%	62	6.8	7.3	56%	58	6.5	7.2	52%	64
Grandparent in multi-generational household	6.9	7.6	48%	59	6.0	7.0	42%	51	6.1	6.8	46%	50	7.0	7.4	35%	60	6.3	6.6	42%	50	6.5	6.6	42%	58

Table A13: Social exclusion index by country group and family type, 2007 and 2011

	2007					2011				
	Most flexible	Mixed, mainly flexible	Mixed, mainly traditional	Most traditional (family-oriented)	Total	Most flexible	Mixed, mainly flexible	Mixed, mainly traditional	Most traditional (family-oriented)	Total
Lone parent, working	2.2	2.0	2.6	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.0	2.5	2.2	2.2
Lone parent, not working	3.0	2.7	2.6	2.8	2.8	3.2	2.6	3.0	2.5	2.9
Couple parents, both working	1.9	2.0	2.3	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.2	2.1	2.0
Couple parents, one working	2.2	2.0	2.4	2.2	2.1	2.2	2.0	2.4	2.1	2.1
Couple parents, neither working	2.5	2.2	2.5	2.1	2.3	2.4	2.1	2.5	2.3	2.3
Parent in multigenerational household*	2.9	2.4	2.9	2.4	2.6	2.7	2.5	2.8	2.6	2.6
Grandparent in multigenerational household*		2.2	2.5	2.2	2.4		2.0	2.5	2.3	2.4
Lone parent, with relatives*		2.2	2.6	2.8	2.6		2.3	2.8	2.5	2.5
Couple family, with relatives, multiple earners*		2.3	2.5	2.1	2.3		2.1	2.3	2.2	2.2
Couple family, with relatives, one or no earners*		2.3	2.7	2.3	2.4		2.3	2.5	2.1	2.4
All parents	2.1	2.0	2.4	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.0	2.4	2.2	2.2

Note: \*Low sample size in the most flexible group.



European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

**Third European Quality of Life Survey – Quality of life in Europe: Families in the economic crisis**

Luxembourg: Publication Office of the European Union, 2014

2014 – 76 pp. – 21 × 29.7 cm

ISBN 978-92-897-1138-8

doi:10.2806/49619

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The economic crisis has reshaped the lives of millions of European citizens. But how has it affected families with children? Children are more at risk of poverty or social exclusion than the overall population in a large majority of EU countries; hence, it is important to understand how the crisis has affected the households in which these children grow up. This report describes the changing quality of life across the EU for different types of families with children and compares their living standards and social situation. Grouping the EU Member States into four categories on the basis of the flexibility or otherwise of their family policies, it also examines potential patterns that may be related to different family policy approaches. Themes that emerge from the findings include the particular challenges facing lone parents, the greater difficulties facing jobless families since the onset of the crisis, and the increasing extent of conflict parents experience in seeking to balance their work and family lives.

ISBN 978-92-897-1138-8

