

RELIABILITY OF A POLICY ACCEPTANCE AND ATTITUDE SURVEY FOR FORMULATING FAMILY- AND POPULATION POLICY

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1. INTRODUCTION

Family policy is aimed at neutralising, or at least lessening, the negative impact of psychological, social and economic constraints for forming families and having the desired/greater number of children. Financial and other family policy measures reconcile the objectives of strengthening families, offering equal opportunities to men and women, and increasing the well-being of individuals and families. It is believed that family policy measures also have an indirect impact on fertility. This is in line with the economic theory of fertility (Willis, 1971; Becker, 1981; Cigno, 1991), which associates the demand for children with the cost of children for their families. Any public transfer, be it in the form of cash benefit, price subsidy or lowering the opportunity cost of childbearing and childrearing, decreases the cost of children for their families and thus positively influences fertility.

However, it appears that social processes - such as changes in the status of women, postponement or refusal of marriage, liberalisation of laws in view of contraception, abortion and divorce, etc. - have a decisive effect on fertility. Past demographic developments have proved that the economic and social welfare by themselves do not stimulate births. They coincide with the changing perception of the family (increase in co-habitations and divorces) and the changing female roles (prolonged education, increased employment); an additional negative impact on fertility might also originate from economic recession, falling standard of living, unemployment, social and political changes, etc. (Stropnik, 1996). It is also evident that couples increasingly tend not to have a greater number of children than they desire, and that they even do not have the desired number of children. Not only the living conditions, but also the life style in the today's Europe is not favourable for big families. All this puts serious limitations to the efforts of population-related policies and, consequently, incentives must be quite high in order to encourage families to have three or more children.

It is extremely complicated to measure the impact of family policy – and in particular the impact of an individual measure – on the fertility behaviour. One can never be sure about the size and direction of influence of other circumstances and about what the fertility rate would have been in the absence of such measures. Nowhere the impact has been felt in the longer term, not even in countries where abortion has been prohibited. Usually, the impact of family- and population policy measures was the greatest at their beginning and it was gradually decreasing as benefits ceased to be new, or their value decreased (Klinger, 1987; Philipov, 1991). The problem is that positive short-term effects have been followed by a decline in births, indicating that these measures have mostly induced fluctuations in births (because of the change in timing) and not so much the births, which otherwise would not occur. But taking into account the fact that postponed births might never have occurred, we can nevertheless speak about positive effects of measures introduced (Pavlik, 1991).

There is some evidence, however, of effective policy measures in France, Austria, Scandinavian countries, Hungary, the former German Democratic Republic, etc. Klinger (1987, p. 420) quotes Calot, who has estimated that in the absence of pronatalist policies, the completed fertility rate in France in the second half of this century would have been reduced by 0.2-0.3 children per woman. Of course, not all the increase in the fertility rate can be attributed to the family policy, but it is true that the fertility rate remained at a satisfactory level until the middle of the 1970s. According to Blanchet and Ekert-Jaffé (1994), the same increase in the number of children per woman would occur in Britain if the present French family benefits were introduced there.

Büttner and Lutz (1990) argue that a remarkable increase in the period fertility level in the former German Democratic Republic may be directly related to the explicitly pronatalist maternity policy package introduced in 1976. Also, the relative stability of order-specific mean ages at maternity indicates that the impact was not in the form of short-term anticipations of births that would be compensated by lower rates of childbearing in future. The total fertility rate was increasing in a six-year period following the implementation of measures, and despite a later decrease remained at the level of 1.7 until 1988, when the transition process began. However, this study was based on a descriptive and intuitive approach where other fertility determinants were not checked for, which limits the reliability of the results (Gauthier and Hatzius, 1997).

In the end of the period 1984-1990, which in Sweden was characterised by a continuously increasing fertility up to the level of 2.13, Hoem (1990) believed that it was a reward for the expansion in public day-care, child benefits, parental leave provisions, parents' rights to part-time work and similar measures. At that time, Sweden was an example country among the developed countries due to its facilitating women's entry into the labour market and their continued attachment to it at minimum cost to childbearing and childrearing.

In the 1990s, however, the impact of other factors on the fertility rate was prevailing, resulting in its decrease to the level of 1.50 in 1999 (Council of Europe, 2000). Rønsen (1997) states that Swedish studies performed in the 1990s do not render much support for the notion that family policies have stimulated fertility. She quotes studies, which have examined the effects of the extension of parental leave and supply of public day-care and have found no significant effects on the births in Sweden and Norway. Her own analysis for Sweden, Norway and Finland indicates that maternity/parental leave extensions may have some positive effect on fertility, child benefits none, while the effect of public childcare coverage was estimated to be negative and significant (Rønsen, 1999). The last finding is somewhat puzzling, but may be explained by the fact that more public childcare facilities are needed when the activity rate of women is higher, and higher female labour force attachment used to be negatively related to fertility in the Nordic countries.¹ It may also be that, due to a large excess demand in many countries, public childcare facilities are a poor indicator of day-care availability.

Gauthier and Hatzius (1997) found only a limited effect on fertility of the governmental support to families: as high as a 25% increase in average benefits (child benefit and maternity/parental paid leave) in 22 industrialised countries would result in a short-run increase of 0.01 children per woman and a long-run increase of 0.07 children per woman. Child benefits are positively and significantly related to fertility – in particular to the birth of the first child - while the impact of the duration of maternity/parental leave and the wage replacement rate proved to be insignificant. No evidence was found that child benefit affects fertility in the Anglo-Saxon countries, but the effect was large and consistent in the Scandinavian countries, with continental and southern European countries in between.

Based on the past experiences and research findings, our assumption is that family policy measures very seldom have important and measurable demographic effects, and if, then it is for very short periods only. Our hypothesis is that people rather easily declare that there might be or would be a positive impact of the implementation of new or changed family policy measures on their decision making regarding having a child or having more children, but when it comes to making a decision, the impact of other circumstances often prevails. One of the reasons for this discrepancy is the fact that survey questions are necessarily given without taking into account all factors that influence one's decision to have a child and the modalities of these factors. Also, since there are no consequences of giving this or that answer, respondents tend to give answers, which they think are expected.

¹ Today, there is no longer a negative relationship between fertility and female employment in the Nordic countries.

2. DATA AND METHOD

For this empirical analysis, the data obtained within the framework of the second round of the European comparative Population-Related Policy Acceptance and Attitude Survey (PPA2) are used. Slovenia was the first to conduct the survey, and namely in May-June 2000. The sample design was a stratified, multi-stage one. The sample consisting of 1550 persons is representative of the population of Slovenia aged 20-64 years, by sex, age, settlement type and region. The data were obtained through face-to-face interviews.

In the questionnaire there was a section on family policy measures. People's attitudes towards thirteen widespread and/or recommended measures were captured, as well as their preferences. The respondents were also asked to name three measures they would most like to see implemented by the government. They further considered the consequences, which the implementation of these measures might have for their own lives - from reconsidering the possibility of having a(nother) child to enabling them to have their next child sooner.

The obtained results were compared with the respondents' answers regarding wanting a(nother) child and the reasons that were important for them personally for (definitely or probably) not wanting a(nother) child. In this way we tried to evaluate the reliability of data collected through a policy acceptance and attitude survey for policy makers.

In order to better explain people's attitudes, their answers concerning the role of certain circumstances in the decrease of the number of children women nowadays have, were checked for, too.

Answers regarding the government's responsibility for creating a family-friendly environment and the respondents' opinion on how much attention the government had paid to the family-related issues in the past three years - as compared to the beginning of 1990s - were analysed as well.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Preferred family policy measures

The respondents were asked to give their opinion of the thirteen measures of family policy, which are generally considered as those that facilitate having, looking after and raising children. A four-point scale was offered: strongly in favour, in favour, against, and strongly against. A very high support was registered to all measures named in the questionnaire. The proportion of respondents who were strongly in favour or in favour of

individual family policy measures was in the range from 84.4% (flexible working hours for working parents with young children) to 96.5% (better housing for families with children).

The people surveyed were asked to name three out of the thirteen offered family-policy measures, which they would most like to see implemented by the government. Percentages of the respondents who opted for an individual measure as their first choice, as well as the ranks of measures according to the first choice are presented in columns two and three of Table 1. In the fourth and fifth column, the respondents' first three choices are taken into account on an equal basis, i.e. without applying weights. Higher ranks indicate what people perceive as important or what they miss. Lower ranks do not necessarily mean that a certain measure is not very important; they may have been allotted also to measures that are already formulated in a satisfactory way. This is undoubtedly the case with the last measure in the list of priority choices, that is "better day-care facilities for children from age three to school age". Due to the international character of the survey, this important measure for families with employed parents is included among the measures to be implemented, although parents in Slovenia do not face a serious shortage of quality day-care facilities for pre-school children.

Table 1: Most preferred family policy measures

Measure	% of respondents, regarding their first choice *	Rank according to the first choice	% of respondents, regarding their first three choices *	Rank according to the first three choices
Improved parental leave arrangements for working women who are having a baby	26.1	1	14.3	1
Lower income tax for people with dependent children	12.6	2	13.2	5
Better housing for families with children	11.7	3	12.5	3
A substantial decrease in the costs of education of children	9.4	4	10.7	2
A substantial rise in child allowance by SIT 10,000 (7% of monthly GNP) per child per month	8.5	5	10.0	4
Child allowance dependent on the family income	6.5	6-7	7.7	7
An allowance at the birth of each child	6.5	6-7	7.1	6
More and better opportunities for parents with young children to work part-time	4.2	8	7.0	10
An allowance for mothers or fathers who do not take a job because they want to take care of their children while they are young	4.0	9	5.3	9
Flexible working hours for working parents with young children	3.7	10	5.0	8
Better day-care facilities for children up to three years of age	3.0	11	3.5	11
Child-care facilities for primary school pupils before and after school and during school holidays	1.4	12	1.9	12
Better day-care facilities for children from age three to school age	1.2	13	1.8	13

Source: PPA2 database for Slovenia, own calculations.

* The sum is lower than 100% due to those respondents who did not know what to choose.

The placement of the improved parental leave arrangements on the first place by a quarter of the respondents does not seem to be consistent with the reality in Slovenia. If both the length of the total maternity/parental leave (one year) and the compensation rate (100%) are taken into account, Slovenia obviously has the most favourable arrangement in Europe (and most probably in the world) in the first year following the birth of a child. If combined with a part-time employment, the parental leave can be prolonged until the child is 17 months old, and all but three months of maternity leave can be used either by the mother or the father. Judging from this, it is not very probable that such a favourable parental leave arrangement prevents people from having the desired number of children or reconciling the parental and professional roles.

Obviously, tax savings due to children are perceived as too low in Slovenia. This is particularly true for taxpayers with the lowest income since they may have no tax savings at all or may be in a position to make use of only a part of the tax allowance. For others, tax savings amount to 17%-50% of the tax allowance, depending on their marginal income tax rate. Consequently, the higher the income, the higher the tax saving.

The young people most frequently name the housing problem – along with unemployment – as an obstacle for (earlier) family formation, so it was expected that persons surveyed would place it among their top priority issues to be improved.

Generally, education in Slovenia is free, but people obviously perceive the costs, which nevertheless have to be paid and are associated with schooling, as a heavy burden for family budgets. Although the high placement of this issue is somewhat surprising, it points to the vulnerability of families with dependent children and should be considered seriously.

3.2 Possible impact on the fertility behaviour

When asked about consequences for their own personal life if their first three preferences were introduced in future,

- 55% of respondents agreed that it would make it easier for them to have the number of children they intended to have,
- 45% agreed that it would enable them to have their next child sooner,
- 45% agreed that they would reconsider the possibility of having a(nother) child,
- 41% agreed that they would probably decide to have a(nother) child (Table 2).²

² The women over age 50 were not asked neither this question nor the one about the intention to have a(nother) child in future.

Table 2: Possible consequences of the introduction of the preferred family policy measures

If the measures, which they consider most desirable, are introduced in future ...	Those who agree		Of them, those who ...			
			... do not intend to have a(nother) child in future		... are uncertain about having a(nother) child in future	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
(a) ... it would make it easier for them to have the number of children they intend to have	733	55	302	41.2	96	13.1
(b) ... it would enable them to have their next child sooner	603	45	267	44.3	78	12.9
(c) ... they would reconsider the possibility of having a(nother) child	597	45	262	43.9	88	14.7
(d) ... they would probably decide to have a(nother) child	551	41	210	38.1	74	13.4

Source: PPA2 database for Slovenia, own calculations.

These results can be compared to those obtained by the PPA1 survey, carried out in nine European countries in 1990-1992 (Moors and Palomba, 1995). The percentage of respondents who agreed that the preferred policy measures would make it easier for them to have the number of children they intended to have, was mostly similar to the one in Slovenia (near 50%) in six countries, amounted to 68% in Belgium, 77% in Czechoslovakia, and to the whole of 93% in Hungary. However, the percentages of those who would probably decide to have a(nother) child were much smaller, from only 6% in Belgium and 9% in the Netherlands; they were higher than in Slovenia in 2000 only in Hungary and Switzerland (48%).

The share of positive answers in the Slovenian survey was the highest among the young (aged 20-29), those who were politically right-oriented, those who had attained the secondary educational level, and those in lower income brackets. For the young and never married in particular, it would make it easier to have the number of children they intended to have. The subjectively estimated impact on the fertility behaviour would be considerably smaller (but still relatively high) for those who were politically left-oriented, highly educated and better off.

The survey results lead to the conclusion that the impact on the fertility of the observed family-policy measures would be very strong and positive, in particular among the young and those with low income. In order to check for the reliability of the obtained results, they were compared with the respondents' answers regarding wanting a(nother) child and the reasons that were important for them personally for (definitely or probably) not wanting a(nother) child.

As can be seen in Table 2, between 210 and 302 respondents were at first determined that they did not intend to have a(nother) child in future, but later indicated that there might be a positive impact of the introduction of their three most preferred family policy measures for their future fertility behaviour. They account for:

- 13.5%-19.5% of the total number of respondents, depending on the alternative answers to the question,
- 27%-39% of those respondents who said that they did not intend to have a(nother) child in future, and
- 38%-44% of those who agreed that the introduction of their three preferred family policy measures would have positive consequences for their future fertility behaviour.

It is not possible to estimate to what extent this was a consequence of misunderstanding the question, in the sense that the respondents believed that they were asked about what their past fertility behaviour would have been if those measures had been introduced before. 71%-74% of this group of respondents answered to another question that an important or very important reason for not wanting a(nother) child was that they already had the number of children they wanted.

As a matter of fact, the complete inconsistency between the answers can be stated only if

- a person declared not to intend a(nother) child in future, but then agreed that (a) the introduction of family policy measures would make it easier for him/her to have the number of children he/she intended to have, and (b) that it would enable him/her to have his/her next child sooner; this was the case of 302 (38.9%) and 267 (34.4%), respectively, out of 776 respondents who did not intend to have a(nother) child in future,
- a person declared to be uncertain about having a(nother) child in future, but then agreed (b) that the introduction of family policy measures would enable him/her to have his/her next child sooner; this was the case of 78 (50.3%) out of 155 respondents who were uncertain about having a(nother) child.

All those who (c) would reconsider the possibility of having a(nother) child or (d) would probably decide to have a(nother) child following the introduction of their three preferred family policy measures, as well as those who were uncertain about having a child but the preferred family policy measures (a) would make it easier for them to have the number of children they intended to have, represent the core target group of the population policy. They account for 33.8% (c) and 27.1% (d), respectively, of those not intending to have a(nother) child under the present family-policy regulation, and 61.9% (c), 56.8% (d) and 47.7% (a), respectively, of those who were uncertain about having a(nother) child.

3.3. Reasons for not wanting a(nother) child

It is very much important for the family- and population policy to realise the importance of reasons for not wanting a(nother) child, first of all as stated by those who were uncertain about having a(nother) child in future but agreed that the introduction of their preferred family policy measures would have positive consequences for their future fertility behaviour. Three most important reasons, named by this subgroup of respondents, were:

1. I am too concerned about the future my children will have,
2. I already have all the children I want, and
3. my job and professional activities would not allow it.³

Interesting enough, the two most important reasons named by those who were uncertain about having a(nother) child are not directly related to family policy measures. The first one is widely defined and covers the whole of the political, economic and social conditions. The second one seems to exclude any possibility of considering having a(nother) child voluntarily. Only the third one includes measures meant to facilitate the reconciliation of parental and professional duties, the parental leave undoubtedly being one of the most important among them. However, its regulation in Slovenia was discussed earlier in this paper with the conclusion that it is probably the most generous one in force worldwide. Most other measures (to be) targeted on active parents are beyond the responsibility of family policy and are rather the subject of labour market legislation or collective agreements. It may also be that people definitely want to devote more time and energy to their job and profession, so no measure would be stimulating enough for them to opt for a(nother) child.

3.4 Reasons for a decrease in the number of children per woman

The answers concerning the role of certain circumstances in the decrease in the number of children women nowadays have, are checked for in order to better explain people's attitudes regarding having a(nother) child.

Slovenia has been witnessing a decrease in the completed fertility (number of live born children per woman who completed the fertile age) for more than a century. Women born around 1875 delivered an average of 4.7 live born children, their daughters 3.0, their granddaughters 2.1, and great-granddaughters 1.8. Women born around 1930 were the first not to have enough children to assure replacement of generations (Slovenian National Report, 1994), while women born in 1944 were the last who had more than two children on

³ For the sake of comparison let us name the three most important reasons for the total population: 1) already having all the children they want, 2) being too concerned about the future their children will have, and 3) the

average. After 1990, 85%-87% of births were those of first- and second born children (Council of Europe, 1999).

The PPA2 survey tried to identify the circumstances, which people in Slovenia consider as important for women to have fewer children than in the previous generations. The offered thirteen circumstances are listed in Table 3 in a decreasing order of importance, i.e. according to the share of “very important” and “important” answers.

Table 3: Importance of reasons why nowadays women have fewer children than in the previous generations

	% of answers »very important« and »important«	Decreasing order of importance
The economic crisis and unemployment	91.1	1
Poor housing conditions	88.0	2
The financial burden of raising children	87.6	3
The increasing number of women working outside home	71.4	4
People want to live more comfortably than in past	72.1	5
The growing desire among men and women for independence and personal advancement	67.9	6
Fear of the future	63.1	7
The large number of divorces	59.8	8
Fear of problems with raising children	57.3	9
Insufficient child-care facilities	49.2	10
The increased availability of contraception	48.8	11
The idea that a small family is better for children	22.5	12
The feeling of Slovenia’s becoming overpopulated	11.5	13

Source: PPA2 database for Slovenia, own calculations.

respondent’s state of health does not allow it. Job and professional activities are only on the sixth place among nine reasons. The first three reasons are the same for those who do not intend to have a(nother) child.

We shall comment here on those circumstances, which were considered as (very) important by more than half of persons surveyed. The three main reasons why women in Slovenia nowadays have fewer children than in the previous generations are of an economic nature:

1. insufficient and insecure income as a consequence of the economic crisis and unemployment,
2. poor availability of (adequate) social housing, the burden of housing costs (rent, repayment of a loan), low chances to solve the housing problem in a satisfactory way in the young adult years, and
3. the cost of children.

These findings are very much in line with those obtained by the 1994/5 Family and Fertility Survey (FFS), and namely that the economic crisis, unemployment and the financial burden of children are the main reasons for the very low fertility rate in Slovenia. So, for example, more than half of the respondents in the FFS did not want to have (more) children due to the high costs associated with them.

The fourth reason, like the third one, is the issue to be treated by the family policy, which should implement measures for facilitating the reconciliation of professional and parental roles. It also has to do with the division of labour within the household. If the male partner does not take a fair share of the household duties, the full-time employed woman⁴ will most probably opt for a smaller number of children. The female employment is perceived as an important reason particularly by those aged 30 and over and by those feeling that religion plays an important role in their lives.

Three subjective reasons follow, of which fear of the future is the most worrying. It is over-proportionally experienced by those who have attained at the utmost lower secondary education and those with insufficient income. Highly educated respondents, however, over-proportionally stress the importance of the fact that people want to live more comfortably than in past, and of the growing desire among men and women for independence and personal advancement.

The large number of divorces is perceived as an important reason for having fewer children by those aged 50-59, those with at the utmost lower secondary education, with insufficient income, living in households with five and more members, and those declaring that religion plays an important role in their lives, in particular.

⁴ The female activity rate in Slovenia is 47.9% as compared to the male one of 60.6%. Only 8.8% of women have a part-time employment, mostly older and partly disabled persons (Statistical Office ..., 2000).

Fear of problems associated with raising children is least felt by the respondents aged 20-29, which is optimistic regarding the fact that the majority of children are born to mothers (and probably also to fathers) in this age group.

The above analysis relates to fertility of the population of Slovenia in general. As described in Section 3.3, the respondents who did not intend to have a(nother) child in future or were uncertain about it were also asked about the importance of reasons for (definitely or probably) not wanting a(nother) child for them personally. The nine listed reasons were only partly similar to the ones offered in the general question on why women nowadays have fewer children than the previous generations. Checking for the interdependence between the answers, we found no indication that people who considered a certain reason important in general tended to give to it significantly more importance in their own decision-making regarding having children, or *vice versa*.

3.5 Government's responsibility for family policy

In this section we briefly analyse answers regarding:

- the government's responsibility for creating a family-friendly environment and
- how much attention the government was paying to the family-related issues in the past three years, as compared to the beginning of the 1990s.

It is surprising that a relatively high proportion of people thought that the government was not, or was only slightly, responsible for providing opportunities for women and men to combine a job outside the home with raising children. It is also curious that the expectations towards the government were lower as regards the reconciliation of work and family roles of women than in case of men. The total share of answers "not responsible" and "only slightly responsible" was 36% when the question was asked for women and 30% when it was asked for men. This could lead us to a wrong conclusion that the household work and care for children in Slovenia are mostly the men's responsibility, while quite the opposite is evident from the time budget surveys. Low perception of the government's responsibility was characteristic for those who did not live with a partner, those with at the utmost elementary education, and those living in households where income was not at all sufficient for covering costs of living. The major characteristic of people with high expectations was their high educational attainment.

The picture is somewhat different when it comes to the evaluation of the attention the government paid to particular family- and child-related issues. The respondents proved to be very critical, 37% of them perceiving that the government paid less attention to families

with small children, and 26% having such an impression regarding the government's activity in the field of childcare.

An informed person would argue that these attitudes couldn't be based on facts but rather on impressions, which are strongly influenced by an individual's socio-economic position, as well as by available information and its interpretation and understanding. It may also be that most people get information by way of newspapers and journals, which tend to overestimate certain elements of regulation or practice without mentioning their positive features as well. For instance, the negative evaluation of the government's attention paid to childcare is over-proportionally spread among the respondents aged 40-49 and 60-69, separated, divorced or widowed, and those living in two-person households – that is persons who, as a rule, do not have pre-school children – as well as among those with at the utmost elementary education, and those living in households with the lowest income, and thus enjoying the 100% subsidy for quality childcare.

As far as the government's attention paid to child-related issues in general is concerned, the fact that those with low education and income are least satisfied indicates their greater reliance and dependence on public transfers and other forms of government family policy measures as compared to those with higher education and income. Having in mind the whole of the family policy measures in Slovenia, which are often income-related and thus in favour of those with low income, one comes to a conclusion that many people are not at all aware of the amount of direct and indirect child-related transfers they enjoy. Of course, nobody can expect to have all child-related expenses covered by the society. The problem may also be in the fact that cash transfers are used for increasing the level of living of the whole family and not only of children, who are the basis for the entitlement to these transfers and for whose benefit they are paid.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In our opinion, all family policy measures can generally be considered to have a positive impact on fertility because they create more favourable conditions for families with children. Paid maternity/parental leave lowers the opportunity cost of children, in particular for well-paid women, while cash transfers may be more important for those with lower income. It is, however, extremely hard to measure the impact of individual measures, and the results obtained are questionable.

Our analysis showed that a great majority of people in Slovenia support the aims and measures of the family policy. On the basis of the survey results one could conclude that family policy measures have an extensive impact on fertility, in particular among the young and those with low income. Unfortunately, this declared strong relationship has

never been proven in practice, neither in Slovenia nor in any other country. It has become clear that the change in one single measure (and even changes in several measures) cannot affect people's behaviour very much and in the long run. The decision to have a child (and, even more, to have another child) is too important for responsible people to be taken without considering the whole of material and immaterial circumstances.

Also, the family policy measures suggested in the survey are not enough defined to allow for serious decision-making. For instance, as far as the parental leave is concerned, its length and the wage compensation rate should have been clearly stated in order to get reliable information on people's probable reaction to the change to be introduced. Moreover, the whole context in which one would decide to have a child is unknown, and it is sure that it has much more impact on taking the decision than the introduction of a single – however important – measure or a set of several measures.

The analysis showed that the population of Slovenia is very much critical of the government performance in creating the family-friendly environment. Comparing people's evaluations with facts, one cannot help presupposing that many negative opinions are not really based on facts, but rather on a flat-rate picture or impression that people have created for themselves in time, depending on their socio-economic position and the availability, interpretation and understanding of the relevant information. Thus, in creating family and population policy, policy-makers cannot fully rely on the results of the policy acceptance and attitude survey, though they may correctly reflect people's opinions. People should first be well informed and then asked for opinion, otherwise their wrong perception may be misleading for policy-makers.

Due to all that, we argue that the opinion surveys are not a reliable source of information regarding the probable change in people's behaviour following the implementation of a set of family policy measures they prefer. Even without waiting to see what the people's actual fertility decisions will be in future if their preferred family policy measures are introduced, we can forecast that the impact of these measures will be much smaller than declared by the persons surveyed, if any. This conclusion is supported by the described inconsistency in answers to different questions in the Slovenian PPA2 survey. Since the question on the possible impact of measures was posed as an "if" clause, it may be that the respondents understood it as something very much hypothetical, something that most probably will not be realised.

Acknowledgement

The financial support by the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia (contract no. 3411-99-25 0656) is gratefully acknowledged.

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