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**Greek Family Policy and Institutional Perspectives Towards Low Fertility.**

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**Abstract**

During the last fifteen years, Greece has shown a substantial decrease in its TFR. According to Eurostat, it was 1.3 in 1999, which was far below the required replacement level. This paper focuses on the critical issues of the family and population policies in Greece. First, it examines the family policy objectives, developments and the constitutional and institutional status of the Greek family. Second, it presents the policy-makers' views on the Greek family formation, with emphasis on low fertility trends. Opinions of policy-makers, Parliament members, government agencies, spokespersons from parental associations and the Greek Orthodox Church are included. All the twelve interviews included were conducted in Athens during the last quarter of 2000.

The qualitative analysis showed that all interviewees acknowledge the negative trends in fertility. However, they expressed contrasting opinions on the policy objectives that the Greek State should set. The four conceptual frameworks, with their respective perceptions on the demographic problem, political ideas and policy objectives that have been identified are: The 'Pro-natalists', the 'Moderates', the 'Neo-liberals' and the 'Radicals'.

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## INTRODUCTION

During the last twenty years, Greece, like other European countries, has shown substantial changes in its main demographic indicators and picture. At the beginning of 2001, the Greek population (according to the preliminary report of the latest census of 18<sup>th</sup> March 2001), was estimated to be 10,939,771, showing an increase of 6.6% in comparison with the data of the 1991 census (NSSG, 2001). However, the crude rate of natural increase<sup>1</sup> has been negative in 1999 (-0.1‰), (compared to 7.4‰ in 1975-79 and 1.6‰ in 1985-89). The crude growth rate of the Greek population of 2.3‰ in 1999 (compared to 12.9‰ between 1975-79 and 6.3‰ between 1990-94) was entirely due to an increase in net migration, which in 1999 was 2.4‰. International migration, in other words, is the major determinant of the Greek population growth since, it accounts for almost 99% of population growth; without migration the population of the country would be in decline (EUROSTAT, 2000a; See also Graph 1). Furthermore, ageing of the Greek population is becoming more accentuated - due to both 'bottom-up', through fewer births, and 'top-down' through increasing longevity. Between 1980 and 1999, the proportion of young people aged under 20 in Greece fell from 30.6% to 22.3% respectively, while that of the people aged 60 and over increased from 17.5%, to 22.9% over the same years. Thus, over the last 30 years the population of Greece has become 'greyer' than ever. Moreover, international projections shows that in the coming decades, it is expected that the process of 'dejuvenation' will be even worse due to the ongoing fertility decline and the increase in life expectancy (EUROSTAT, 2000a; See also Graph 3). Live births in Greece have been decreasing since the late eighties, going down from 148,100 in 1980 to 102,000 in 1999, and the crude birth rate fell from 16.5 in the 1970 to 15.4 in 1980 to 9.7 in 1999. Greece's Total Fertility Rate (the mean number of children per reproductive woman) has also shown a substantial decrease. TFR in 1999, according to data, was 1.3, which is the lowest post-war level and very far below the required level for replacement of the population (EUROSTAT, 2000a; Graph 2).

In addition to the above trends, the patterns of family formation and dissolution have changed notably in recent years. Greek people tend to get married later, marriages become less stable, and women have changed the timing of childbearing over their lives. In particular, while in 1970s the overall divorce rate remained stable at 6 divorces per 100 marriages, it showed an increase to 10 divorces in 1980, and further jumped to 13 divorces per 100 marriages in 1998. The mean age at first marriage for both men and women increased by about 3 years since the beginning of the 1970s. The Greeks are likely to wait to marry until they are in their thirties. In addition, between 1980 and 1998 the mean age of women at childbearing has continued to rise steadily from 26.1 to 28.7 years (EUROSTAT, 2000a; Table 1). This delay in childbearing is in particular attributable to the growing number of women opting to continue their studies and take up a career. The trends were similar for men.

All these demographic changes have not only altered the age structure of population, but also generated a wide range of new developments, as well as changes at both societal and familial levels. The low fertility rates and the population ageing - two interrelated characteristics - decisively affect many aspects of economic and social life. Among them, the future of the Greek welfare state and the pension system are particularly influenced, raising formidable social and economic challenges related to the financial support, provision and care of the elderly people. Further alarming consequences have occurred, or are expected to occur in the near future, at macro and micro levels, arising from the low growth and the change in the age composition of the population.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the crude rate of birth minus the crude rate of deaths.

Governments as well as the public, throughout Europe and the more developed countries, facing the same trends, are increasingly concerned about issues relating to population dynamics and family policy. Several researches have been carried out, and a number of international meetings and conferences have been organised on the long-term implications of low fertility trends and population ageing.

This paper focuses on the critical issue of family and population policy in Greece. In order to give the reader an introduction, first it briefly examines the family policy development during the last three decades. The policy administration and the constitutional and institutional status of the Greek family have been presented as part of family policy objectives. In addition, family relationships in the legal framework are analysed along with the main components of family policy including child benefits and family allowances, maternity and parental leave, taxation and child care provisions. Towards the end this analysis is used to establish a correlation between the above aspects and the fertility trends in Greece.

Secondly, this paper presents the policy-makers' views on the Greek family formation and especially on the trends of low fertility. A detailed qualitative analysis of twelve interviews with policy-makers from the main political parties (the four represented in the Parliament), from various ministries and other governmental agencies, spokespersons from parental associations and the Greek Orthodox Church, has been performed. Those interviews were conducted from 26<sup>h</sup> of October to 6<sup>th</sup> of December 2000, in Athens.

The policy-makers' views on the trends of low fertility, its determinants, and implications have been presented. Also included are their criticism on previous and current family policies of the country, along with their opinions on the development of concrete family and demographic policies (priorities, considerations, constraints, measures, incentives).

The outcome of the interview suggested that all interviewees acknowledge the negative trends in fertility in Greece, and that Greece is facing a imbalance between deaths and births. However, although they all admitted to the 'gloomy' prospects of the country, and referred to the most important causal factors of this negative development, they were quite differentiated in assessing the significance of those factors. They also expressed contrasting opinions on the main policy objectives that the Greek State and all the interested groups should set in order to reverse the declining birth rates. In general, four main conceptual frameworks, with their respective perceptions on the demographic problem, political ideas and policy objectives, were identified through the content analysis of the interview responses:

1. The 'Pro-natalists' who favour a pro-natalist policy and link the fertility decline to the future survival of the Greek nation.
2. The 'Moderates' who point out the significance of the demographic trends, and support a more active role assumed by the State.
3. The 'Neo-liberals' who, although acknowledge the importance of the State intervention as an indirect determinant of fertility, are against the direct involvement of the State in the promotion of pro-natalist policies, especially when family benefits and tax allowances are its policy tools.
4. The 'Radicals', who attribute the current situation to the wider socio-political changes taking place in modern societies, and stress each individual's right to make his/her own decisions on family and child-bearing.

## **DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

As Gauthier (1996b) notes, family policy over time reflects a strong interplay between demographic changes and government responses, which operates at two levels: the macro level and the micro level. At the macro-level, the fertility decline and population ageing are pressurising the welfare states and directing governments to consider policies either to increase fertility or to adjust the existing institutions to the new age structure of the population. At the micro level, family's transformation is increasingly calling for further state support at the family level (p.2).

Family policy in Greece has also been affected by the new demographic developments of low fertility rates, increase of divorces, entrance of mothers in to the labour market and late childbearing. The changes and characteristics of the general socio-economic environment, which has gradually moved from rural-agricultural to urban-industrial, have also influenced it. Moreover, the socio-economic development and the concurrent cultural changes brought changes at both the individual family experience level and in the family patterns. The increasing frequency of family dissolution, social acceptance and recognition of one-parent family, free unions and premarital cohabitation, step-families, and the new family roles in general, are some examples of this socio-economic and cultural transformation. In light of these modifications, family affairs gradually began to receive more attention in the political agenda in Greece.

### ***Definitions of population and family policy***

A large number of social scientists, academic analysts, elected representatives, journalists and others, have shown an interest in policy or the term 'policy', and in the way that public life is organised. Policy in general, is encountered in a wide range of contexts, different fields of actions, political systems and culture, different times and circumstances (Colebatch, 1998).

Definitions about population policy are numerous and varied ranging from: 1). A deliberate effort by a national government to influence the three demographic variables, *viz.*, fertility, mortality and migration; 2). A set of co-ordinated laws aimed at reaching some demographic goals, for example, achieving a stationary population or zero population growth, and/or 3). Direct and indirect measures, formulated by a whole range of social institutions, including government, which whether intentionally or not, might influence the size, growth rate or geographical distribution, as well the age structure of the particular population (Isaacs, *et.al.* 1991 pp.4-5; Stycos, 1982).

In general population policies fall under two categories: explicit and implicit. Explicit measures are those taken by a government to influence population size, growth and composition. An explicit policy is a statement or document by a national government announcing its intention or plan to influence the country's population growth, composition, or distribution. In other words, it is clearly documented by the government. Explicit population policies have been issued in a variety of forms, such as legislation, documents by governmental ministries, and commissions, or sections of development plans, policy declarations and statements by the high level officials. An implicit population policy, on the other hand, are the laws, regulations and other directives, which although not necessarily issued for the purpose of affecting population growth, composition or distribution, have the effects of doing so. Socio-economic development policies for example, on education, housing, or health, are thought to have an indirect influence. Thus, implicit policies are formed when aspects of family policy are included as part of general socio-economic policy or any other policy that is related to general social issues.

Although population policies differ from country to country with respect to

the specific cultural, historical, socio-economic and political environment, according to Isaacs (1991, pp.6-7) they contain the following common elements: a) *Rationale* (consideration of reasons for the existence, and a justification of the policy); b) *Objectives and Goals* (certain societal goals and objectives, which can vary from the more general to the more specific ones); c) *Demographic Targets* (establishment of specific quantitative indicators and/or mathematical formulae for assessing policy effectiveness); *Policy and Program Measures* (preceding actions taken to achieve policy's goals); *Implementation and Institutional Arrangements* (specific tasks, such as monitoring or co-ordination, assigned for effectiveness).

Very often it has been argued that a distinction should be made between family policy, and demographic or population policy (Barbier, 1995; Hantrais and Letablier, 1996). According to Barbier (1995), the objectives of family policy are related to the redistribution of economic resources so as to eliminate differences in the standards of living for households with and without children. In other words, unlike demographic policy, family policy's objectives do not intend to change family formation and family size. Moreover, as with population policy, family policy too can be categorised as implicit and explicit. According to Moussourou (1994), explicit family policy means either actions with specified objectives for the family or the expressed wish and/or justification for such actions. Implicit family policy means action that touches the family directly or indirectly, while its specified objectives are other (p. 86).

Titmuss (1974) gives a broad definition of social policy that can also be interpreted, as Hantrais and Letablier (1996) support, as family policy. He portrays social policy in terms of the constitutional actions aimed at achieving special goals, through the provision of welfare and minimum income levels in ways that will shape the development of society. "Family policy under this broad definition is seen more as a policy which intentionally target specific actions and measures initiated and designed so as to have an impact on family resources and on family structure" (p. 139). However, it is well recognised that the dividing line between the family and demographic policy is sometimes quite difficult to be done as, often not all the population or demographic policies have family as their main target (Moussourou, 1994; Hantrais and Letablier, 1996).

This paper concentrates more on family policy in Greece than on demographic or population policy. Population policy is touched only through few major legislation and policy measures that directly or indirectly affect the main demographic variables of fertility. This reflects the fact that Greece has no concrete set of legislation or measures aimed directly at demographic targets. All the policies so far have been mostly family and social policies that have some influence on the behaviour of families, that is, they will influence demographic variables.

## **FAMILY POLICY ADMINISTRATION**

The administrative organisation of family policy differs widely across the EU member states. It can be explicit or institutionalised. Additionally many social and economic policy measures of a more general nature may also have a significant impact on families or even be specifically aimed at families without being considered as family policy measures (Dienel, 1995; Kamerman and Kahn, 1978). Underlying the policy-making process and the political forces influencing population, demographic and family decisions, is the government in charge of establishing appropriate administrative structures enabling them to formulate and implement support measures for families (Hantrais and Letablier, 1996). Thus, in some European countries, the support for families and family affairs, as registered in national constitutions have been accompanied by designated ministry in this area. Greece is one among the few member states (other countries are Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) that have not created a ministry or government department to deal with family affairs. Even

though constitutionally, the state undertakes to protect the family, policy makers only began to focus attention on family and population affairs in the early 1980s, and the Greek government has so far not chosen to designate a ministry with responsibility for the family. This fact partly shows the degree of political importance that the national constitution gives to family affairs. At present, responsibilities for families, policy formulation and implementation around family and population in Greece are split between several different ministries, governmental departments and non-governmental agencies, which in general can be classified in to three major categories:

The first category includes various Ministries, such as: The Ministry of National Economy, which has a special department of Population and Employment; The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Social Security, with several departments which gather and maintain information on family issues, children's welfare and issues of the elderly (several family benefits and child allowances also come under this ministry); The Ministry of Labour which manages maternity and parental leaves, the other major area of family affairs; the Ministry of Treasury; and the Ministry of Education. However, not all of the above Ministries implicitly formulate or implement family or demographic policy. More often, their policy is to include measures that can have an impact on families, while making policies for other more general areas such as in health or education.

The second category includes independent institutions with more public character than private, which act to make population policy in a practical, specific and more direct way. They include the National Organisation of Welfare (*EOP* in Greek); the Patriotic Institution of Social Welfare (*PIKPA* in Greek); the National Foundation for the Settlement of Repatriates (*EIAPO* in Greek); and the METERA Infants' Centre, which aims to implement the Ministry of Health's programs for the protection of unmarried mothers and their children, as well as of abused and neglected children and parents.<sup>2</sup> The Orthodox Church, which has had a very influential role in family-policy formation, also falls in to this category, even though this role has progressively diminished, in the recent years. However, it also has a long tradition of dedicated volunteer service and still runs a number of institutions for the protection of high-risk children and adolescents.

The third category brings together all the Civil Law associations that represent all interest groups in demographic and family issues. They include the Greek Confederation of Families with Many Children (*ASPE* in Greek), Institute for Combating the Demographic Problem (*IADIP* in Greek), the Greek Society for Demographic Studies (*EEDIM* in Greek), or the Family Planning Association. However, the above institutions have not been seen to be a powerful lobby for protecting the family unit or the interests of the individual members, or be able to politically influence the family, demographic and/or population decision making process and keep family issues on the political agenda. This happens although there is a high degree of acceptance of state intervention in the private lives of the citizens. Additionally, they do not have the same political power or receive the same official recognition as other European family associations have, especially in countries such as in France, Belgium, Luxembourg or Portugal.

Equally important in policy administration level is the fact that, the responsibility for family affairs is often shared between the different levels of government. Local governments are also in charge of organising services that affect families in their every day life, such as the provision for the young children, the community care, or housing (Hantrais and Letablier, 1996, p.49). In Greece, this division of responsibilities is not particularly evident, with decentralisation and delegation associated with fragmented and disparate provision.

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<sup>2</sup> METERA is, by statute (law 2082/92), responsible for all international adoptions.

## **FAMILY POLICY OBJECTIVES**

Although the majority of the European countries are facing similar demographic trends, as far as actions at a national level are concerned, each country organises its population, demographic, socio-economic policy, social welfare and families or demographic policies, according to its own socio-economic and political circumstances and cultural traditions. Definitions of families are shaped by political forces, determined by the need of institutional users, and dependent on national conventions and cultural traditions (Hantrais and Letablier, 1996, p. 44). Greece's family policy objectives can be identified through the Greek Constitution and the Family Laws, the way that economic resources are redistributed to families, as well as through specific family or demographic policy initiatives, including specific measures for the protection of family life.

### ***a) Greek Constitution and Family Laws***

As early as 1822, when the first Constitution of the independent Greek state was developed, actions concerning the protection of the Greek population were taken, aimed particularly at the protection and care for widows and orphans of war (Moussourou, 1994, p. 86). In the 1926 Greek Constitution, the main aim of actions concerning the family was to have the protection of marriage as top priority, with special regard to the protection and care of families having many children (large families). The responsibility for youth was declared a year later (1927). The Greek Constitution in 1975, although did not specify family as a form and structure, recognised it as "the foundation stone for the preservation and the advancement of the Nation" under the State's protection (*ibid.*). Moreover, according to the same Constitution: a) marriage, motherhood and childhood are under State's protection. b) Large families, invalids and victims of war, widows and orphans of those who have died in the war and the incurably ill were eligible to special care by the State. c) Health of the citizens was under the State responsibility, special measures were taken for the protection of youth, old age and the handicapped, and the poor were provided for by the State. d) State cared for housing the homeless and those inadequately housed. e) Individuals with special needs were entitled to special measures (art. 21 §1-4). f) The equality between the Greek men and women was also declared (Moussourou, 1994; Symeonidou, 1996).

A major step towards 'family' policy was taken in 1983, with the introduction of the New Family Law. It was a legislation that approached family from a completely new perspective and dealt with contemporary problems faced by the Greek families. The change was a breakthrough in the existing framework because it consisted of measures that focussed on family (as a basic social unit) and its needs, rather than just for its reproductive function within the Greek society. Many liberal regulations were applied concerning the definition of family, the individual rights, the relationship between family and labour market demands (parental leaves, restrictions to lay off due to family obligations, etc.). In line with the earlier mentioned declaration of equality between the two sexes, the New Family Law concentrated on the rights and obligations between the spouses, the protection of the interests of the children, the clearness of familial relationships, and the recognition of equal rights between 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' children (Moussourou, 1994; Symeonidou, 1996). This law, also required new spouses to decide in common about all family matters, including their residence; contribution and provision for the family and children's surname (though a wife could keep her surname after marriage). Additionally, dowry as a proposition for a marriage was abolished, and the possibility for each spouse to claim a share in the property acquired during the marriage in case of its dissolution was introduced. In case of divorce, the arrangements also changed from controversy to mutual agreement (*ibid.*). Thus, this legislation could be seen as the most comprehensive attempt to match demands for liberalisation of the marital bond with

traditionally embedded perceptions about the importance of family as the ‘foundation stone’ of the Greek society (see the summaries in Table 2: The Landmarks of Major developments of the Greek family/population legislation).

### ***b) Redistribution of economic resources***

Governments in the European member states have formulated their own family policy objectives reflecting the circumstances related to their political ideologies, socio-economic developments and their interpretation of family needs in order to achieve greater social justice. These objectives attributed to family policy, have been designed to redistribute resources horizontally or vertically, as well as to influence the behaviour, including decisions about number and timing and of children, the organisation of life time and family lifestyles (Bardier, 1995, pp. 20-1). Horizontal redistribution of the resources means transferring resources from the individuals or couples without children to those with children in the same income brackets. This redistribution, as Hantrais and Letablier (1996) indicate, is used mainly for three purposes: 1) for the purpose of rewarding families for carrying out an important service to the community, 2) as a means to compensate families for the financial burden of raising children, and 3) as a means to secure greater equality between couples with children and couples without children (pp147-8). On the other hand, vertical redistribution of the resources means transferring resources from wealthier to poorer families. In most of the European countries, family policy objectives are based on these two redistribution of resources, with increasing emphasis being placed on helping families and children at risk.

Like the other south European countries, from the early stages of its development, the Greek social security and welfare systems have implemented income-tested or means-tested benefits and family allowances. However, the employment-insurance model the Greek welfare systems followed was less developed than the other founding member states, affecting the way the resources were distributed. Successive Greek governments have held the perception that poverty and lower standard of living are more often associated mainly with large families and therefore gives priority to low-income families, large families, young couples, old people and one-parent families. Thus, in order to achieve greater social justice, the country now employs the vertical redistribution of resources, with most measures being means-tested.

### ***c) Family and Demographic Policy Initiatives***

The aforementioned demographic changes that began to develop by 1985 (especially the observed declining fertility trends), forced governments to modify their support framework for families. New legislation had to be adopted and new measures had to be introduced in order to support families more effectively. In addition to the laws mentioned earlier, a number of measures and Social Policy Action Plans, with reference to the relation between family responsibilities and workplace regulations, and directly or indirectly targeting family size in general, have been proposed and/or implemented through the Greek National Parliament. Among them the most important are:

1) The legislation 1892/90 (introduced by the right-wing government of *New Democracy*), displayed a shift to a more pro-natalist policy because of the sharp fertility decline. The child benefits were significantly extended to mothers with three children under the age of three, but it was a means-tested payment scheme. At the same time, mothers with four children or more were entitled to receive a lifetime pension (though means-tested).

2) The Law 2065/92 abolished: a) tax relief granted based on the documented expenditure of the household, b) the tax-free allowance granted for childminding expenses. Consequently, high-income brackets gained, while medium-income brackets, not only failed to gain anything but also suffered a significant increase in their tax burden when compared with the previous



system. Particularly hard-hit were “large families on moderate incomes who had reached the limit of tax relief on the official receipt system (650,000 drachmas, or 2,509 ECU, for a family of four)” (Dumon, 1994, p. 4).

3) Under the Law 2085/92, mothers who work as civil servants and have children under the age of six years, may receive unpaid leave up to a maximum of two years or up to one year for each additional child.

4) In 1993, an inter-party Committee of the Greek National Parliament (under the title ‘Working Group for the Study of the Demographic problem’) published a report which made a number of recommendations to the Greek government, regarding the demographic situation of the country (Parliamentary Minutes, 11/2/1993). However, most of those recommendations were not implemented, mainly due to fiscal considerations, as well as the fall of the (right-wing) government the following autumn.

5) During the end of 1990s, there have been certain setbacks in family policies, in the name of fiscal discipline and continuous public expenditure retrenchments. In 1997 eligibility for benefits was restricted with respect to family income (families earning over 3,000,000 Drs. per year were no longer eligible), and the benefit rate was set at 23,000 Drs. per month. Since then, the benefit has been upgraded each year based on the consumer price index. However, the income threshold that determines eligibility has so far remained unchanged (Matsaganis, 2000, p.4).

(Also see the summaries in Table 2: The Landmarks of Major developments of the Greek family/population legislation).

## **FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS, LEGAL OBLIGATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Majority of the European countries face similar demographic trends, as far as actions at a national level are concerned. However, as mentioned earlier, each country organises their population and socio-economic policies and social welfare according to their own socio-economic, political circumstances and cultural traditions; and so does its family relationships, particularly the legal obligations and responsibilities of family members towards one another. Moreover, very often, decisions on family matters are subject of acrimonious public and parliamentary debate. Conflicts are associated with the legitimacy of abortions, the introduction of legislative reforms to liberalise divorce, the conditions of custody following divorce, and the children’s rights outside wedlock. Recently such debates have been concentrated more around unmarried cohabiting couples’ rights, or the legislation or formalisation of alternative family living arrangements, for example, living arrangements for same-sex couples (Appleton and Hantrais, 2000). The main features of the legal framework covering Greek family life are the following:

### ***Marriage and Divorce Law***

Marriage in Greece need not be celebrated either in a church or in a registry office, or equivalent, but must be recorded in civil registers. The secularisation of marriage in Greece is relatively recent. From 1982 (Law 1250/1982, Article 1), civil marriage was made equally binding as a religious ceremony. The legal age of marriage is, like the other EU countries, eighteen for both men and women, while for younger age parental consent is necessary. Since the state undertakes to protect marriage in the Greek constitution and in family law, divorce was difficult to institute. However, since 1983 couples are able to undo the ties of marriage if they wish by mutual consent and on the grounds of mutual incompatibility, taking into account the rights and interests of their children (Moussourou, 1994, Millar and Warman, 1995).

### ***Unmarried Cohabitation***

The legal arrangements for unmarried cohabited couples reflect attitudes towards the status of marriage within the society. The great emphasis that has been placed recently on parents' responsibilities for children as individuals, made policy-makers to pay more attention to alternative living arrangements and the implications of lone parenthood and unmarried cohabitation (Appleton and Hantrais, 2000). In Greece unmarried couples are not officially registered, and are not placed under any legal obligations. During mid 1990s, Greece was the only country among the European member states, which did not treat unmarried cohabitants as a unit for the purpose of social assistance (*ibid.* p. 39). Successive Greek governments have been reluctant to introduce legislation to regulate the alternative living arrangements mainly to avoid removing the remaining differences between marriage and less formal relationships. As it was mentioned above, family law recognises only marital relationships as forming a family.

### ***Same-Sex Cohabitation***

Greece has not so far introduced any legislation that recognises same-sex cohabitation. Homosexual couples can not register their relationship in the same way as married couples. Additionally, they are excluded from the right to adopt children.

### ***Contraception and abortion***

The considerable high rates of abortion, the availability of contraceptive methods and well as the development of new technologies for treating fertility, create the need for the governments to form legislation on contraception, the right to terminate pregnancy, and medically assisted reproduction. However, on questions concerning procreation, the legislation is deeply rooted on cultural and ideological traditions of each country where these issues have been identified, as well as on the outcomes of the strength of feeling among interest groups such as medical professionals, scientists, the church, individuals, feminist group and family lobbies. In Greece methods of female contraception and abortion have been legalised since the middle of the 80's. The State was attempting to encourage large families, and these were reinforced by the Official Orthodox Church, consistent with the pro-natalist policies. The pill, available since 1963, can be legally prescribed only to correct menstrual irregularities. However, in reality women who wanted to use it could purchase it from a pharmacy without the requirement of a medical prescription (Georges, 1996; Naziri, 1991). Legislation regulating the practice of abortion was introduced in 1986. Abortions are performed free of charge on request at every public hospital up to the twelfth week of pregnancy, and at any stage of the pregnancy if the mother's health is in danger. In case of serious malformation of foetus, abortions could be requested up to 24 weeks and for pregnancies resulting from rape they could be requested up to 19 weeks. However, apart from the abortion law reform which has been a topic of long debate, Greece is one of the European countries, which has not examined ethical issues raised by technologies enabling medically assisted reproduction. Moreover since 1992, artificial insemination is covered by social security (Dumon, 1994).

### ***Lone Parenthood***

The extent to which lone parenthood constitutes a 'special category' for social assistance to the policy makers varies considerably from one country to another based on different cultural and political factors and circumstances. In Greece, because the number of dependent children living with lone-parent families is extremely small compared with other European countries, (for example, in 1996 the number was 6 per hundred households in contrast to the 13 of EUR-15) (EUROSTAT, 2000b) and extra marital births are not socially acceptable, the issue of introducing measures for lone parenthood has not yet been included in the political agenda.

### ***Adoption***

Like other European Countries, Greece has introduced regulations laying down the conditions under which children can be adopted as a means to ensure that orphaned and abandoned children could grow up in a secure family environment, and also to allow childless couples to experience parenthood. Greek legislation on adoption sought to ensure the interests and welfare of the children adopted. The case of allowing adoption by unmarried cohabiting couples, single person or same-sex couples has not yet been accepted.

### ***Reconstituted families***

Reconstituted families are poorly defined and targeted in the family policy. Mostly, step parenthood is considered as a moral obligation towards stepchildren, and it is a standard practice for stepparents to adopt the children of their new partner.

### ***Gender equality, Rights and duties within couples***

The principle of equal rights and payment for men and women at work was introduced in 1975 by the Greek constitution. However, the wider concept of gender equality within the family was established by the Family Law of 1983 with the removal of the automatic attribution to the man the title 'head of household'. The new law also confirms the legal obligation of spouses to one another. Women can keep their maiden name on marriage, and parents can decide on the child's surname together, although by inheritance child takes the father's surname (Moussourou, 1994). Whether or not the couple gets married in a church, they are expected to provide mutual support and assistance and to work together for the good of the family they have created.

### ***Parental Authority, Paternity and Custody***

According to the Greek Civil Code parental authority belongs, 'in theory', to both parents jointly, if the father has recognised the child. However, it is often exercised only by the mother. Moreover, the 1983 Family Law, provided for presumptions of paternity, voluntary and judicial acknowledgement, judicial legitimisation and disclaimer of paternity (Hantrais and Himmighofen, 1999). In case of custody, according to the 1983 Family Law, parental care always remains with both parents. In case of divorce by mutual consent, spouse must submit a written agreement about the custody of their children and arrangements for the other parent to communicate with his/her children. In addition, the rights to custody and the ability to act legally for the rights of the children are given by a court decision (Millar and Warman, 1995).

## **THE MAIN COMPONENTS OF CURRENT POLICIES**

The main areas of family and social policies can be said to have four main components that influence fertility trends: the childcare provision, family allowances, maternity and parental leave and taxation measures. These components form the axes upon which policy works have been proved to facilitate couples to successfully combine employment and family life, alleviate the opportunity cost of childcare and also compensate for additional financial burdens for bringing up the children.

### ***Childcare provision***

As Appleton and Hantrais (2000) note, childcare is an area in which governments have tended to be much more interventionist, although there are marked differences with regard to funding mechanisms and the level of standard of provision, among the European countries (p.45). In Greece, although public provision, childcare in particular, is viewed as one of the main responsibilities of the public sector, this area remains relatively underdeveloped. Constitutionally the family is under the protection of the State, and the State is obliged to provide adequate number and quality of infant schools, kindergartens, nursery schools, etc. However, the actual number of these facilities provided are small compared with the actual needs. Moreover, public childcare provisions declined during the end of the 1990s, making their effects more apparent in certain areas of the country, as government withdrew the subsidies. For example, the number of nurseries fell from 5,700 in the academic year 1997/98 to 5,576 in 1998/99. On the other hand, during the last decade, private provision has become more widespread, particularly in the big cities, thus playing an increasingly important role in the areas of child protection (data provided by NSSG, 1999).

Thus, although the State does not impose mutual obligations on family members, families or parents, they have to make own arrangements sometimes with limited financial ability. Figures given by some studies indicate that, due of the inadequacy of the services available in the area of childcare, family and community networks, rather than the State, still continue to provide a major source of support. Very few children under the age of three are looked after in public facilities (Symeonidou, 1996).

One of the reasons for the low childcare services is the fact that Greece's social protection expenditure as a percentage of GDP is very low compared with the average of the EUR-15 (23.3 % in 1993 and 24.5% in 1998 for Greece compared to 28.9% and 27.7% of the total expenditure respectively for EUR-15). Greece also occupies the last position on social expenditure on the group of function of family-children-and maternity, measured either as a percentage of GNP or by inhabitant, although there was an increase as a percentage of total protection benefits during the last decade (an increase of 5.9% of total protection benefits to 8.1 in 1998) (data provided by EUROSTAT, 2000a).

### ***Family allowances and child benefits***

Public provision for family allowances were announced for first time in Greece in 1958, and the term family allowances referred to a supplementary family income, which alleviates the cost of bringing up children. Originally, they were restricted to workers only, but paid for all children. Since then a number of modifications have been done. Today, the entitlement for family allowances and child benefit does not have a universal fixed-rate character, but it varies depending on different factors such as family size, the rank of the child in the family, children's age, the length of time spent in education as well as the family or parental income<sup>3</sup>. Large families receive higher rates of payment than families with only one or two children. Rates are progressive with the family size, with the larger amount of family allowances and child benefits going to the third and subsequent children. This is because Greek governments have always considered that the country's population growth depends on couples having more than two children, and it was also an easier way to compensate for the additional cost incurred. Concerning age limits for benefits, Greece, like the most other European countries, have set the

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<sup>3</sup> Variations in the entitlements for child benefit is also a reality in the other European countries, reflecting, as Hantrais and Letablier, (1996), notes "differences in policy orientations" (p.58). In the United Kingdom for example, in the early 1990s child benefit was paid at a higher rate for the first child than for subsequent children, suggesting that the cost incurred by families may be greater for the first child compared with other children. France, on the other side, was the only country not to pay family allowances for the first child.

limit at 18 with an extension up to 25 years of age for children continuing their education, as they are considered as dependants. Moreover, although family allowances have generally been granted on universal basis, by the early 1990s Greece had introduced some form of targeting and means testing to compensate low-income families. Thus, household resources are taken into account in assessing eligibility for means-tested benefits.

Such disparities in the assessment of eligibility for benefits resulted in not all the children having the same value. In addition, according to Hantrais and Letablier (1996), the way that funding family policy operated, in terms of cash benefits, reflected the nature of each country's social protection system, rather than the institutional importance attributed to family matters (p.184). In Greece, family benefits and child allowances are not funded through taxation, but mainly through contributions, because of the insurance-based social security system. The State also provides some subsidies.

### ***Parental and Maternity Leave***

Although different forms of leave and work-time arrangement are available to both men and women, in practice it is women who most often interrupt their employment or reduce their working hours to look after young children (*ibid.* p. 167). In Greece there are a number of measures favouring women, including the protection of working women against dismissal, maternity leave of 20 weeks (two months before and three after childbirth), paid at 100% of the salary and parental leave (3 months, for each parent, in the private sector). Generally, in the private sector there are various leave schemes which can be used by parents for child-raising and childcare, but they are invariably unpaid and, due to a number of severe restrictions, working parents do not make use of them (Symeonidou, 1996).

In the public sector, the situation is much better. Female employees have the option, after the aforementioned (paid) maternity leave, either to reduce their working day by two hours for the first two years and by one hour for the next two years, or to get a nine-month paid maternity leave (Law 2683/99, article 53). In addition, there are a number of other types of parental leaves to accommodate various family circumstances, thereby considerably differentiating these two categories of salaried employees, as far as active incentives for the formation of families are concerned.

### ***Taxation Measures Favouring Families***

Throughout Europe, taxation measures are numerous and highly diverse depending on the social protection system each country uses. However most of the European countries have progressively transferred their social protection systems from couples or family units to individual recipients due to increasing number of women spending a large part of their adult life in paid employment (Lewis, 1992).

After 1980s, the Greek State has shown a clear willingness to support the family through direct or indirect tax reduction. The tax of the families of salaried workers and of pensioners is retained at the source of their income. There is tax relief according to the number of children. Special provisions are made for single parent families, widows and widowers. Also people with special needs including children have double tax reductions. No tax is payable for the first house purchased. In case a new house is being bought because the house already owned is too small for the family, tax exemptions increase proportionate to the family size. Among the indirect taxation, the most important ones are the non-value-added tax imposed for health, education and judiciary services. This tax system too has an impact on families, since childcare costs are taken into account in the household's income assessment (Symeonidou, 1993; 1996).

As far as family relationships and individualisation are concerned, Greece operates a mixed system offering the choice between the individual or joint taxation or a combination of the two.

Married couples can thus be taxed separately or jointly, or in some cases, couples could choose between individual or joint taxation. The individualisation of tax liability aims at the economic well being of the wife. Families are treated differently according to the number of family members with an income, where, joint taxation pays greater recognition to couples responsibility to finance their partners.

## **FAMILY POLICY – AN OVERVIEW**

As Hantrais and Letablier (1996) note, in countries where the state has a high degree of legitimacy in family life, and thus a high degree of intervention, family policy has often been developed as a discrete area of social policy with its own designated administrative structures and sources of funding (p. 184). In this respect Greece does not have a strong tradition of family associations or a long history of interest in family affairs, and is one of the member states, which has not moved towards the creation of an autonomous area of policy.

Like the most EU member states, in Greece the family has served as a focal point of social protection, and in general is considered to be a core of social institution. The normative institutional framework of the family is embodied in the national constitution, which recognises the family as a social institution founded on marriage and undertakes to afford it protection. The national constitution also affords an enabling and supportive framework for family law. However, although the constitutional and institutional structures protect family as a unit, State's intervention in the policy area does not imply a high degree of political intervention. The constitution also stipulates that the State has a duty to provide for the special needs of large families, young people, war widows, orphans and other categories of population at risk.

The fact that the central government has delegated the responsibilities for family affairs to separate departments such as health, social security, education and employment makes it difficult to explore completely Greece's implicit policy. Individual policies too, are generally not well co-ordinated, and their effects on population dynamics are more complex and awkward. As family policies require a clear and explicit statement of aims and plan, backed by theoretical frameworks on how to achieve these goals, the Greek family policy can be said to contain problems both with its formulation and operation. The family policy objectives and initiatives described above frequently refer to isolated targets with little apparent awareness of the interrelationship between factors.

Part of the Greek family policy can be described as population policy with pro-natalist orientation. This is because in the recent years family policy has put much emphasis on the compensation for financial burdens (mainly via allowances and tax reductions for families) and on the improvement of family environment (through the reconciliation of family and working responsibilities and through childcare assistance) thereby affecting the main demographic variables.

## **INTERVIEWS WITH KEY POLICY MAKERS AND POLITICIANS**

### ***Methodological Issues- Structure of Interviews***

An in depth qualitative analysis has been conducted in order to sketch a general pattern of political initiatives against the aforementioned demographic changes in Greece (especially on low fertility trends), understand formation of family policy and highlight the different views that various interested parties express on this issue. Representatives from the main Greek Political parties (the four represented in Parliament), policy makers from various ministries and

other governmental agencies, spokespersons from parental associations, as well as from religious organisations, were contacted.

Before proceeding to explain interview techniques and their outcomes, it has to be noted that the main aim during the selection of the final sample was neither the achievement of a 'representative' sample in the statistical sense, nor the presentation of solid political ideas supported by a specific parliamentary majority. This is because there rarely has been an unanimous agreement on specific goals and targets, even within the same party's confines. Therefore, some of the views expressed – especially by the MPs of the major parliamentary parties – can be characterised as 'personal', in the sense that they do not usually correspond to explicit policy directions and publicly disclosed documents. Therefore, this analysis aimed at obtaining a general sketching of different views held on family issues and fertility trends by various interested parties, which actively seek to influence state policies concerning the formation of families. Moreover, as emphasised above, this research technique was chosen in order to provide additional room to effectively address the rationale behind political initiatives on family and population issues and general policy making.

The interviews conducted were of a semi-structured nature. Thus although an initial interview plan/diagram had been prepared, with the key thematic units predetermined, the sequence and wording of the questions were not expressly articulated (see Cohen, and Manion, 1994, chapter 13). A more relaxed and free environment was thus encouraged, in which the interviewer and the interviewee were given more flexibility to comment on the main issues under consideration. By using predetermined goal-directed questions, the interviewer 'channelled' the interviewee towards a set of desired responses, which however, were left almost entirely to the latter, as far as the wording and the length were concerned.

Twelve interviews were conducted between the period 26/10/2000 - 6/12/2000, in Athens. The interviewees were mainly asked to elaborate their views on the following issues:

- Fertility trends in Greece at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Evaluation of these trends.
- Views on the determinants of low fertility and its implications. Reference to national and international context, and factors ranging from economic to political, and from racial to biological.
- Problems that could be encountered in the future.
- Previous and current family and demographic policy features. Need for State intervention.
- Considerations and proposals for main priorities. Policy objectives, measures and necessary incentives.
- General overview (current situation and future prospects).

### ***Identity & Affiliation of Interviewees***

The interviews covered a wide spectrum of representations from governmental and non-governmental agencies, research institutes and political parties, with the latter slightly over represented, given the crucial role that the legal framework (i.e. legislation passed through the Greek National Parliament) plays towards the promotion and implementation of family-planning measures.

The interviews conducted included the following:

- 3 MPs from the ruling socialistic party "Panhellenic Socialist Movement" (*PASOK* in Greek). Among them was the Deputy Minister of Health, Welfare and Social Security; the Vice-Speaker of the Greek National Parliament and Secretary of the Social Policy section of the Central Committee and a MP who, together with four other colleagues, had recently

(summer 2000) brought to the Greek Parliament a law-proposal that consisted some very radical policy initiatives on the part of the State to support large families;

- 1 MP representing the main opposition party (right wing) “New Democracy”(ND in Greek) and responsible for Population and Demographic issues;
- 1 representative from each of the two remaining parliamentary parties (left wing). The first was member of the Central Committee of the “Coalition of the Left and Progress” (SYN in Greek), and Secretary of the Demographic Policy and Women’s Issues section of the Central Committee. The other person was a spokeswoman for the Political Bureau and member of the Central Committee of the Greek Communist Party (KKE in Greek) responsible for the section on families, women’s issues, health and welfare;
- 1 representative of the Ministry of National Economy, former Head of the Directorate of Population and Employment;
- The Greek Prime Minister’s advisor on population and demographic issues;
- A well known demographer from the National Centre for Social Research (EKKE in Greek), Section for Social Policy;
- Two representatives of non-profit NGOs. One of them was the president of the “Greek Confederation of Families with Many Children” (ASPE in Greek), which is the officially recognised body representing those families with four or more children. The other person interviewed was the Secretary of the “Centre for Demographic Studies” (EDHM in Greek); and
- A spokesman of the Holy Synod of the Greek Orthodox Church, responsible for matters of marriage, family, child protection and demographic issues.

### ***INTERVIEW OUTCOMES***

It must be said that all the interviewees acknowledged the negative trends in fertility in Greece. They noted that Greece is facing a deteriorating imbalance between deaths and births, as well as labour shortages and imbalances by the reduction of the size of active population, high expenditures for the health care for the elderly, and finally, serious financial problems in the social security system.

They are all aware of the fact that while in 1982 the fertility rate was 2.1 children per woman of reproductive age, by 1999 it had fallen sharply to 1.3 children, a rate far below the replacement level of the population. According to all the respondents, these trends are related largely to changing individual attitudes and perceptions on issues such as ‘fertility’, ‘family’, ‘tradition’, and ‘commitment to society and/or relatives’. Socio-economic and cultural determinants such as educational level, employment prospects, income, health and family influences shape these attitudes at an individual level. On the wider social context, factors such as urbanisation, labour-market demands, life-style, health and welfare policies, tax incentives, advancements in medicine, particularly in the area of contraceptive methods and abortion practices, all have their influences.

However, although they all admitted to the gloom surrounding the issues, and addressed the most important causal factors leading to this negative development, they were quite differentiated in assessing the significance of those factors. They also expressed contrasting opinions in terms of the nature of government’s intervention and its corresponding level of support for families. Thus, they gave different priorities to the main policy objectives that the Greek State and all the interested groups should set in order to reverse the declining birth rates.



In general, four main conceptual frameworks, with their respective perceptions on the demographic developments, political ideas and policy objectives, were identified through the content analysis of the interview responses. Each one of those types of thoughts has been analysed below (See also matrix of the respective perceptions of various political actors).

### ***1. The 'Pro-natalist' Perspective***

This perspective is supported by the main opposition party (*ND*), the Greek Orthodox Church, the Greek Confederation of Families with Many Children (*ASPE*) and a considerable number (albeit minority) of MPs of the ruling party (*PASOK*).

The Pro-natalists stress the dangers deriving from a declining population in relation to the increasing population of Turkey, a traditional rival of, and a constant military threat to Greece. As it was repeatedly mentioned in their responses, “there is an imminent problem of recruitment for the Armed Forces... this is a tragic situation” (representative of the *ASPE*). It was also claimed that “we are in the far frontiers of Europe” and “we live next to countries which experience a baby-boom”, while “cultivating a hostile climate surrounding the Greek territory” (representative of the right-wing party *ND*). The problems that Greece faced by the increasing influx of immigrants (mostly illegal) from other Balkan countries in the last decade constituted for the pro-natalists an imminent danger to the “integrity” of the Greek nation. Although some of them admit the positive effects (in economic, as well as in fertility terms) that various ethnic groups with big family sizes and high fertility rates might have on the country’s population, they however stress the possible “distortion of the Greek conscience” (a *PASOK* MP).

Among the pro-natalists, the Greek Orthodox Church favours a radical return to the old traditional values and customs, and claims that the “quality” of the families with many children is unquestionably higher than that of the rest (representative of the Greek Orthodox Church). The representative’s arguments indicated the keen attempts of the Orthodox Church to retain its traditional character as a key advisor of the Greek State, not only on fertility issues, but also on family and general moral issues. In the same line of thought towards family roles, the pro-natalists approved a more or less traditional family model comprising the male-breadwinner and female-housewife.

The pro-natalists strongly favour an interventionist State on issues of family size and structure. Support for families is seen as the government’s main responsibility, especially in relation to encouraging childbearing. They place a great emphasis on generous tax and other financial incentives for those with many children, and mainly oppose the introduction or preservation of a means-tested benefit system, and income “ceilings” as far as various allowances and parental-leave schemes are concerned. Some even proposed a radical “attack” against the non-married people. Moreover, as they favour large families in Greece the principle of voluntary parenthood is remised.

Finally, the only difference in views among the pro-natalist interviewers was the reluctance shown by the socialist-party MPs to criticise their own government for demographic mismanagement. Although they all agreed that the State has to play a vital role in reversing the falling fertility trends, they however skilfully avoided accusing the ruling party (which has been in power for 16 out of 20 years in the last two decades) for unsuccessful political initiatives and measures. This contrasts with the rest of the pro-natalists, who clearly scorn the government for “having abandoned the families with many children” and “having been absent when most needed” (representatives of *ND* and *ASPE*).

## ***2. The 'Moderate' Perspective***

This category consists of those who acknowledge the detrimental demographic situation in Greece, and support a more active role assumed by the State. However, they do not endorse the extreme arguments put forward by the former group. The representative of the Ministry of National Economy, a researcher from the National Centre for Social Research and an MP of *PASOK* support this perspective.

These respondents pay more attention on causal factors related to general socio-economic trends in the Greek society (e.g., internal migration from the countryside towards the urban centres, high unemployment and high childcare expense) and to changes at individual preference ('shifted' attention from 'being' to 'well-being').

The moderates favour an interventionist role on the part of the State, as far as the labour-market mechanisms, social protection and economic efficiency are concerned. This role is perceived as having to do with facilitating family making through the implementation of the appropriate legal framework and social construction and not by handing out money. For example, "introduction of a legal framework that covers parental leave for both parents", and "dismissal of the disparities between public and private sector in maternity and parental leave" (demographer from *EKKE*). However, they do not believe that legislation by itself could remedy the current situation, or that the introduction of compulsory measures could have any effect on the way young couples perceive family formation and child-bearing.

Despite the fact that they do not hastily endorse any accusations against the Greek State's policies so far, they do believe in the significance of its intervention in family and population issues, and stress the lack of coherent demographic family policies in the past. According to them, it is high time that the State formulated a realistic plan of action that would take into account the recent and future transformations of demography not only of the Greek society, but also of the EU and the world economy (representative of the Ministry of National Economy). As far as the future trends are concerned, there are few differences among the 'moderates'. For example, the independent researcher from the *EKKE* predicts that the progressive shrinking of the Welfare State will have negative consequences on family formation. However, the socialist-party MP, and the former deputy-minister of Health, Welfare and Social security are rather optimistic on the family policy prospects in Greece, given the full integration of Greece into the EU and its increasing spending on Social Security and Public Health problems.

## ***3. The 'Neo-liberal' Perspective***

The Greek Prime Minister's advisor for demographic and family issues maintains this perspective. He usually also represents all those technocrats whose main objectives are: a) The creation of a more efficient and economically effective State mechanism, and b) The disengagement of the State from the role of the sole provider of social security and welfare. In his responses, he often spoke of "socialisation of the children's well-being", meaning the diffusion of funding responsibilities down the administrative ladder: from the central government to the regions, and then to the local authorities, employers and parents themselves. In other words, responsibilities to support families should be taken by governments only for families in need, and therefore, they oppose any direct involvement of the State in the promotion of pro-natalist policies.

Family transformations and implications of fertility decline are viewed in a less alarmist way, maintaining that society is able to adapt to a new demographic development. In the same line of thought, the main causal factors of the present declining fertility rates could be linked to:

1. The breaking up of the traditional extended family ties, a unique feature of the Greek society for centuries;
2. The unemployment and uncertainty of young people within an increasingly global economy;
3. The contradiction between aspirations for a professional career on one hand, and formation of a big family that could enjoy all the comforts which modern scientific and technological developments entail on the other.

Likewise, the neo-liberal views are also reflected on the following proposals put forward, for economic development and demographic invigoration:

- Progressive integration, through carefully planned steps, of most of the foreign immigrants.
- Exemption for small and medium-sized enterprises from most of their tax burden and security and welfare contributions, in order to give them incentives to hire more personnel.
- Introduction of more ‘lenient’ labour-market regulations, especially for small firms (i.e. part-time and seasonal employment, redundancy regulations).
- Encouragement of women’s participation in labour force.
- Abandonment of the means-tested benefits policy and the introduction of a flat-rate benefits system for every child until her/his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- Extension of parental-leave schemes.
- Shift of attention from the families with many children to all the newly married couples, and creation of “a minimum social security net for the most needy in society”.
- Distinction between a ‘benefits system’, which has to be guaranteed and funded by the State, and a ‘social-security system’, which should be funded by the employers and employees on a mutual basis.

In summary, this perspective constitutes a ‘non-interventionist’ but a more ‘self-support’ ideology, an ‘individualistic’ turn in demographic policy; a turn which is linked to a wider debate prevailing in contemporary politics about the role of the Welfare State in a global economy.

#### **4. The ‘Radical’ Perspective**

According to this perspective, advocated by the two representatives of the Parliamentary Left, what is worth noticing today is not just the declining fertility trends. It is mostly the shrinking of the Welfare State, on one hand, and a masterfully orchestrated attack against a series of individual and collective rights by the neo-liberal discourses, which predominates the action of governments, financial institutions, industrial-military complexes and the mass media.

Firstly, it must be said that even among the Leftist parties’ representatives, there are certain differences of views: One of them stresses the inherent injustices and inequalities of the capitalist system itself as the major source of demographic policy deficiencies, and calls for a radical transformation of the present socio-economic structure (representative of *KKE*). On the other side, there is the view that it is crucial to preserve and enrich the contemporary welfare system, which has been the outcome of a progressive combination of labour-movement demands and social-democratic State reforms in the last 50 years (representative of *SYN*). In other words, while the former favours a radical socio-economic transformation on a global scale, towards a communist society, the latter follows a rather reformist approach within the existing capitalist system. However, when faced with the practical aspects of the demographic situation in Greece, they both reach an agreement on the main causal factors of the population decline, as follows:

- 1) The transformations witnessed in the recent decades by the Greek families, especially in demands for higher standards of living.
- 2) The effects of urbanisation on family structures, and the alienation and isolation experienced by people in the big urban conurbation.
- 3) The new working roles of women and the modern stereotypes as reflected on the typical ‘professional–wife–mother’.

Moreover, this perspective stands in sharp contrast with the previous ones. The traditional family is not praised. Instead, radicals very strongly insist that issues such as individual rights, gender equality, voluntary parenthood and free choice of family size be distinguished from ‘moral responsibilities’, and ‘social imperatives’ in family formation (inside or outside marriage). Moreover, ‘pro-natalist’ ideology was heavily criticised, and labelled the perception that the neighbouring countries with higher birth rates are an imminent threat to Greece’s survival, as “hysteric and deeply nationalistic”.

Government’s responsibility is placed on the creation of equal conditions and opportunities for all the individuals, irrespective of family size. The average labourer interests them as equally as those with many children. However, governments should take full responsibility to support families and especially those with working parents. As far as redistribution of resources and tested allowances are concerned, their policy is that “it is crucial that money goes mainly to the most needed families” (representative of *KKE*). Thus they favour a vertical redistribution of resources (from the richest to the poorest part of population) and generally favour a means-tested benefit system. “Moreover, giving women the means of joining the labour force is seen as the most effective way of supporting family and increasing fertility, much more effective than increasing cash payments and subsidies to families. The provision of good and sufficient child-care facilities is essential to achieve this goal”.

Overall, this perspective stands as a more egalitarian sex-role policy objective, promoting greater equality between men and women in paid employment and family responsibilities.

### ***Similarities and differences of the four perspectives***

Several similarities and differences have been identified in how the above four perspectives assess the Greek family policy, its priorities, fertility trends and their implications:

First, most of the respondents pay more attention to the non-financial causal factors of low fertility. It appeared to be a common belief that neither the income level nor any kind of direct financial assistance influences an individual’s decision to postpone creation of a family. According to the interviewees, such incentives do not play the most crucial role in family formation and childbearing, since most people simply do not wish to create a big family. In other words, it is a matter of attitude towards family, together with all its prerequisites and implications on individual’s life.

Second, it was commonly suggested, though with different weight placed upon each aspect, that labour-market demands unquestionably placed an unbearable burden on each working person, especially on women who had to fulfil the dual role of a ‘successful business-woman’ and a ‘successful housewife’. In this respect, all the respondents agreed that an improvement of social policies was necessary.

Third, most of the respondents attached a negative meaning to the aforementioned statements, albeit according to each one’s perspectives. For example, the Church representative saw these trends as a “moral decadence” and a “mental immaturity” (Orthodox Church). The pro-natalists stressed the national dangers that individualism entails. As with the ‘moderates’, they viewed the fertility decline in a more or less alarmist way and opted for an explicitly interventionist

policy, that aimed at encouraging fertility and traditional roles. The representatives of the Left called for a renewal and enrichment of social solidarity and equality, without surrendering the so-hard-fought-for individual rights.

Lastly, the Greek State was judged as highly inefficient as far as the implementation of sound family and demographic policies were concerned. The economic retardation during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century combined with political opportunism and nepotism jeopardised any attempt to construct the necessary sub-structure for a long-term Social Security and Welfare system. Public money was spent on a ‘charitable’ basis, without taking into account the long-term consequences on the demographic ‘map’ of the country. This was acknowledged by all the respondents, even though the blame was invariably put on the ‘opposite side’, the ‘others’.

## **CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

On analysis of the various issues (family policy development, family policy objectives, legal framework and main components) presented in this paper alongside the responses from the interviews, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The Greek State does not have a clear, explicit and coherent family policy; and successive governments have failed to provide the necessary incentives for a reversal of the fertility trends.
- There is a lack of consensus among the various interest parties, not only on the causes of the demographic ‘problem’, but also on the nature of the problem itself. Consequently, the main aims and priorities of any future family policy framework have not yet been clearly established.
- There is a gap between theory (‘Ideal’ and ‘Desired’ family policy) and practice (implementation of policies, and/or adoption of specific targets and measures). This gap is caused either by political opportunism, high cost and fiscal considerations or simply by different ideological standpoints and political affiliations.

The fragmented and often inconsistent policies that embrace families make a demographic renewal difficult to attain. Although in future family policies could be more pro-natalist in their aims and approach, they will certainly have to confront the particular socio-economic structure, low economic growth, increasing international competition and a fragile social conscience. Other issues such as immigration, the new EU directives on employment and working hours; effects of technological advancements on reproduction and life expectancy; the changes in gender roles within the family and the weakening of the marriage institution due to increased divorce rates and single parent hood; are important factors which will engage family policy in the future.

In the same context, it is immensely interesting to note one of the observations of an ND spokesperson: “The demographic problem is not an eye-catching header in the newspapers or on the television stations. It does not count as a real problem in the everyday life of the Greek citizens, since there is no such thing as a well organised publicity campaign initiated by the government or the mass media”. Thus it is clear that, the State not only face a crucial challenge in taking pro-active measures embodied with vision to combat the causes and effects of low fertility trends, but also have a responsibility to take a conscientious effort to create an awareness of the importance of these issues among the public and other sectors of the society who can directly or indirectly influence the general demographic map of the nation. However, as noted by Moussourou, (1994), the State should be able to effectively integrate its efforts to impact fertility trends with its measures to “safeguard the cohesion of the family and the solidarity of its members” (p.100).

### Matrix of the Respective Perceptions of the Various Political Actors

		<i>Type of Thought</i>			
		<b>Pro-natalists</b>	<b>Moderates</b>	<b>Neo-Liberals</b>	<b>Radicals</b>
<b>Implications of fertility decline (a)</b>		Strong –Negative	Moderate - Negative	Weak -Negative	Moderate - Negative
<b>Determinants of low fertility (b)</b>	<b>Socio-economic changes</b>	-	✓	✓	✓
	<b>Changing Individual’s Attitudes</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<b>Moral Failings</b>	✓	-	-	-
<b>Need for State’s Intervention</b>		Explicit intervention	Moderate intervention	Non-intervention	Explicit intervention
<b>Policy Objectives</b>		Population increase - advancement of the Nation	Effectiveness of social protection – Economic efficiency	Individual responsibility for social protection - Economic efficiency	Individual rights – Social justice
<b>Acknowledgement of individual rights</b>		-	-	✓	✓
<b>Redistribution of resources in family policy (c)</b>		Horizontal	Horizontal	Vertical	Vertical
<b>Tested family benefits &amp; allowances (d)</b>		Non-means tested	Means tested	Means tested	Means tested

**Notes:**

(a) **Strong:** ‘Survival’ of the Greek nation, **Moderate:** General demographic and labour imbalance, **Weak:** Belief in society’s adaptability.

(b) **Socio-economic transformations:** Urbanisation, labour market demands, health and welfare policies, etc.; **Changing Individual’s Attitudes:** Employment prospect, income, education etc.; **Moral Failings:** selfishness, unfaithfulness, and avidity.

(c) **Horizontal:** From those without children to those with children. **Vertical:** From rich to poor people

(d) **Means tested:** Allowances in proportion to income level (less income more allowance). **Non-Means-tested:** The same allowances to all irrespectively of income.

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**Table 1: Demographic Profile and Family Formation in Greece Over 20 Years**

<i>Population</i>	<b>Early (1980)</b>	<b>1980s</b>	<b>Early 2000s (2000)</b>
Area (km <sup>2</sup> ) and Density (hab./km <sup>2</sup> )	131,625		131,625
Population on 1 January	9 587,5		10 545,7
Crude Rate of Natural Increase (per 1 000 pop.)	5,0		-0,1
Crude Rate of Net Migration (per 1 000 pop.)	1,8		2,4
Crude Rate of Increase (per 1 000 pop.)	6,8		2,3
<i>Population Structure</i>	<b>(1980)</b>		<b>(1999)</b>
Proportion of total population by age group, (%)			
0-19	30,6		22,3
20-59	50,5		54,9
60 +	17,5		22,8
Aged dependency ratio (population aged 0-19 & 60+ as a percentage of pop. aged 20-59), (%)	92,8		82,3
Old age dependency ratio (population aged 60+ as a percentage of population aged 20-59), (%)	33,7		41,7
<i>Fertility</i>	<b>(1980)</b>		<b>(1999)</b>
Life births, (1 000)	148,1		102,0
Proportion of life births outside marriage, (%)	1,5		4,0
Total Fertility Rate (children per woman)	2,21		1,3
Crude Birth Rate, (per 1000 population)	15,4		9,7
Mean age of women at childbearing, (years)	26,1		28,7**
Mean age of women at first birth	23,7		-
<i>Nuptiality</i>	<b>(1980)</b>		<b>(1999)</b>
Marriages, (1 000)	62,4		61,8
Crude marriage rate, (per 1000 pop.)	6,5		5,9
Mean age at first marriage, (years)			
Males	27,9		30,3**
Females	23,6*		26,5**
Divorces, (1 000)	6,7		9,5
Crude divorce rate, (per 1 000 pop.)	0,7		0,9
Total divorce rate, (%)	10		13**
<i>Mortality</i>	<b>(1980)</b>		<b>(1999)</b>
Deaths, (1 000)	87,3		103,0
Crude death rate, (per 1 000 pop.)	9,1		9,8
Life expectancy at birth, (years)			
Males	72,2		75,5
Females	76,8		80,6
Infant mortality rate, (per 1 000 live births)	17,9		5,9
<i>International Migration</i>	<b>(1980-84)</b>		<b>(1999)</b>
Net migration, (1 000)	17,2		25, 0
<i>Population Projections, 2020 (Baseline scenario of Eurostat's long term population scenarios)</i>			
Total Fertility Rate	1,70		
Life expectancy at birth, Males	79,4		
Females	83,6		
Net Migration (1 000)	25,0		
Population by age group, (%)			
0-19	21,65		
20-59	51,63		
60 +	26,73		

\*1975 \*\* 1998;

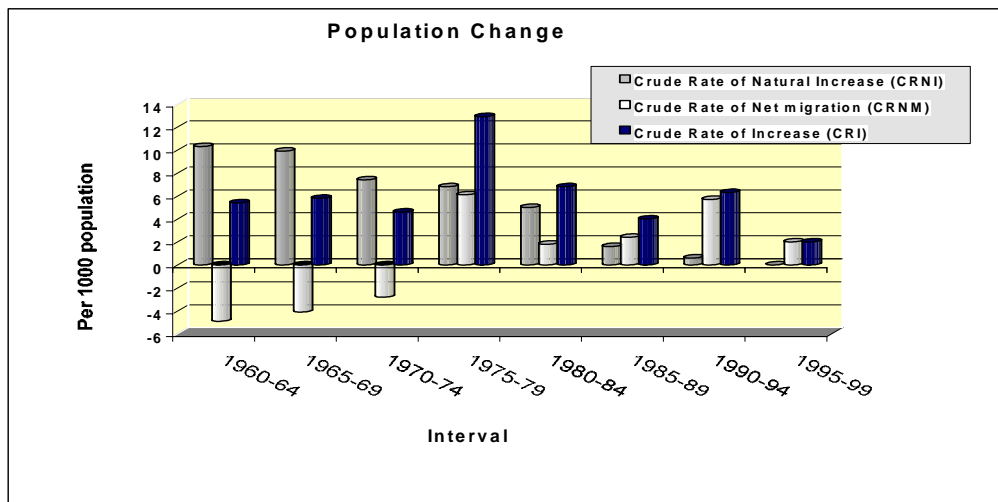
Source: EUROSTAT, (2000a), *European Social Statistics – Demography. Theme 3. Population and Social Conditions*, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities; EUROSTAT, (2000b), *The Social Situation in the European Union*, European Commission, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.



**Table 2: Landmarks of the Major Developments of the Greek Family Policy**

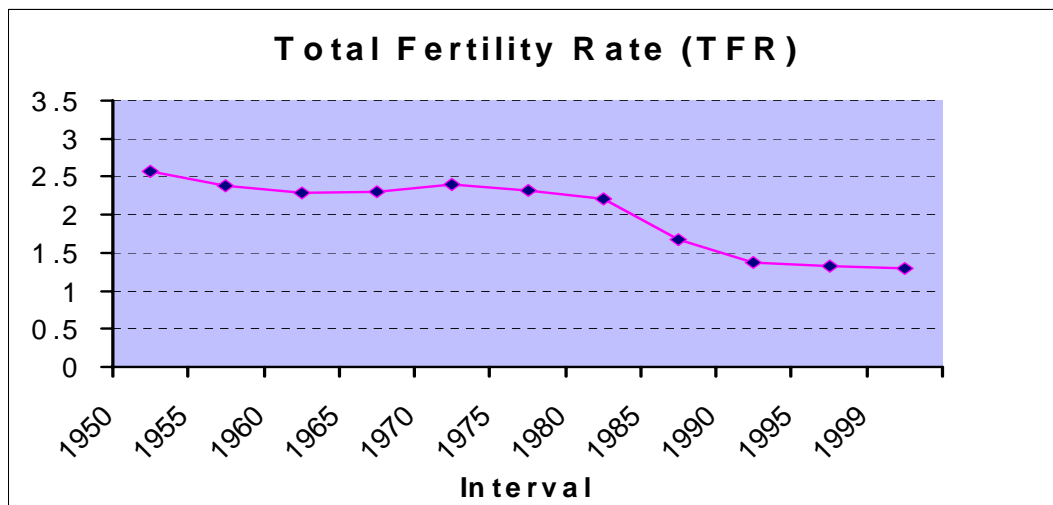
<b>Year</b>	<b>Development Landmarks</b>
<b>1822</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ First Constitution of the independent Greek State: special care for widows and orphans of war.</li> </ul>
<b>1912</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ First maternity leave legislation for workers in factories and industry (unpaid, wage-earners only, duration of leave for 8 weeks).</li> </ul>
<b>1926</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New Constitution and Family Law: protection of the family and marriage, special guard for large families.</li> </ul>
<b>1934</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Second maternity leave benefits legislation (for wage-earners only, duration of leave for 12 weeks, type of benefit compulsory, covering 33% of earnings).</li> </ul>
<b>1944</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ First Law defining 'large families' and measures for their protection.</li> </ul>
<b>1946</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ First legislation governing family relationships.</li> </ul>
<b>1955</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tax relief for large families.</li> </ul>
<b>1958</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ First family allowances schemes (restricted to workers only, paid for all children).</li> </ul>
<b>1972</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Introduction of allowances for families with three or more children (valid up to the completion of the 15<sup>th</sup> year of age for the last child).</li> </ul>
<b>1975</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New Constitution: Family is considered as "the foundation stone for the preservation and the advancement of the Nation".</li> <li>▪ Declaration of sexes equality, marriage, motherhood and children are under the State's protection; large families, invalids, victims of the war, widows and orphans are under special protection.</li> <li>▪ Maternity leave expanded for 16 weeks at public sector (for wage-earners only, type of benefit compulsory).</li> </ul>
<b>1979</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Modification of the 1944 Law governing large families.</li> </ul>
<b>1980</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expansion of child allowances given to large families (given to all children irrespective of family income).</li> </ul>
<b>1982</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Family Law: Secularisation of marriage.</li> </ul>
<b>1983</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New Family Law: New concepts and provisions were introduced: civil marriage; equality between sexes; family relationships; abolition of dowry; divorce by mutual agreement; abolition of distinction between 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' children.</li> <li>▪ First Plan on Social Policy.</li> </ul>
<b>1984</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New Family Law governing workplace policy (number of restrictions in the implementation).</li> <li>▪ Upgrading of family allowances for working parents (means-tested, related to the number of depended children).</li> <li>▪ Expansion of maternity leaves (equal to 14 week for private sector).</li> <li>▪ Introduction of 3-month parental leave (for both working parents until the child reaches the age of 2 1/2, unpaid, covering public sector as well).</li> <li>▪ Introduction of 6 days paid leave to working individuals for caring their children.</li> </ul>
<b>1986</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Declaration of the importance of the fertility as a social institution and the governments responsibility to support family.</li> <li>▪ Legalisation of abortion (Law 1609/1986) (induced up to twelve weeks, covered by social security).</li> </ul>
<b>1988</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Second Plan on Social Policy.</li> </ul>
<b>1990</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Introduction of allowances to all mothers who will or have three children under the age of 3 (means tested).</li> <li>▪ Lifetime pension for mothers with many children.</li> </ul>
<b>1992</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New Family Law: introduction of a number of new institutions in the field of child-care, upgrading parental and maternity leave, reducing marginal tax rates; introducing the system of nursing at home.</li> </ul>
<b>1993</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (February) Publication of the findings of the Inter-party Committee of the Greek National Parliament on the demographic problem of the country.</li> </ul>
<b>1997</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reductions of age limits of protected children for eligibility for lifetime pension, although the family allowance for the third child was increased.</li> </ul>
<b>1999</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expansion of maternity (equal to 20 weeks) and parental leaves in the public sector (fully paid).</li> </ul>

**Graph 1: Population Change over the last 40 years, Greece.**



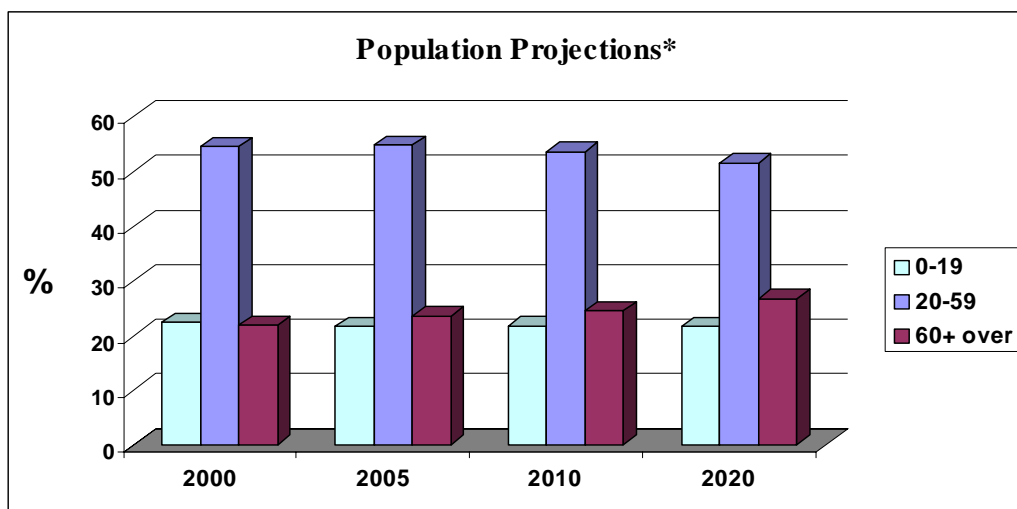
Source: Eurostat, (2000a), European Social Statistics – Demography. Theme 3, Population and Social Conditions, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

**Graph 2: Evolution of Fertility over time, Greece.**



Source: Eurostat, (2000a), European Social Statistics – Demography. Theme 3, Population and Social Conditions, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

**Graph 3: Population By Age Groups, Forecast 2000-2020, Greece.**



\* Baseline scenario of Eurostat's long term population scenarios, compiled in 1996.

**Source:** EUROSTAT, (2000a), European Social Statistics – Demography. Theme 3, Population and Social Conditions, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.