



Family Policy in Europe. An Efficient Tool of Gender Equality or Rescue in front of Demographic Crisis?

Conference organized by Warsaw Office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation and the Network of East West Women, NEWW-Polska in the framework of the project "Fit for Gender Mainstreaming"

20 September 2007

Conference Room, "Gazeta Wyborcza, ul. Czerska 8/10, Warsaw

The practice of many European Union countries show that family policy can serve not only as an instrument of support for people raising their children or coping with the consequences of demographic crisis, but also as an efficient tool to introduce gender equality and provide an answer to the economic challenges of the modern world. It is a systematic activity guided by the pragmatic goal of investing in the development of society as a whole and building social capital. This kind of activity should be indispensable element of adjusting to globalization processes. Family policy should be consistent with the aims and aspirations of diverse family models within any given society and encompass transformations of a modern family model which becomes often a form of different partner relationships.

Although decisions on social policy are made by EU member states, the European Union plays a crucial role in setting up general standards and activity course and it tries to motivate its member states to develop family policy in compliance with gender equality.

The focus of the conference is a debate on different models of modern family policy in the EU states. The starting point of the discussion will be a presentation of changes to family models resulting from the transformation of gender roles and the activities of emancipatory movements. Can family policy be an efficient tool for gender equality? What are some examples of good practices in other European countries in this respect? Politicians introduce family policy models in a particular cultural and political context. Can they accept an inclusive approach and develop family policy free from normative, ideologically-based and culturally sanctioned expectations? Even though the European Union has "soft" approach towards social policy can Europe develop common family policy based on uniform standards?



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CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

16:00-16:15 - Welcome

Agnieszka Grzybek (Gender Democracy/ Women's Politics Program, the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Poland)

Małgorzata Tarasiewicz (Executive Director of the Network of East-West Women, NEWW-Polska)

16:15-18:00 - *Different states, different models?*

In the Czech Republic and in Germany one of the elements of family policy programmes is a need to include men to a greater extent in duties connected to raising children and taking care of the household. The present Czech government is now in the process of implementing a family policy program developed and accepted by the former government which is now in opposition. In Germany, the Christian-Democrat Minister of Family, Seniors and Youth is similarly implementing a progressive programme of equal opportunities.

In Poland family policy does not have a successful history. Regardless of the political view of the government it is usually misinterpreted as social welfare policy so it deals only with actions directed towards families with numerous children. It has been characterized by hasty initiatives (e.g. one-time financial supports for newborns). Family policy has been characterized by a failure to take a long term perspective, a failure in stringent analysis, and a failure to connect goals of social and economic development with family policy. In March 2007, after two years of power, the right wing government has announced a programme of family policy. It seems from the preliminary presentations that its aim is to support parents in connecting work and family life, provide families with financial support and promote development of society friendly to children and families.

- What are the models of family policy in Poland, Germany and Czech Republic?
- What solutions should family policy have to enable working parents to combine work and family life on the equal and partner grounds?
- How to create a modern, long-term family policy promoting equal opportunities for women and men, free from ideologization?
- To what extent models of family policy which are promoted within the European Union are based on the EU standards?
- Can Europe develop common family policy free of political divisions which will include gender perspective and encompass transformations of a modern family model?

▪ **Polish model of family policy - Joanna Kluzik-Rostkowska**, Minister of Labour and Social Policy (Poland);

▪ **German model of family policy - the representative of the governmental institution (Germany);**



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- **Czech model of family policy - Michaela Marksova-Tominova**, Chairwoman of the Association for Equal Opportunities, former Director of Department for Family Policy and Gender Equality, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (Czech Republic).

Commentary:

- **Prof. Irena Wóycicka**, the Gdansk Institute for Market Economics;
- **the representative of the European Institution**

Moderation: **Adam Leszczynski**, "Gazeta Wyborcza"

18:00-18:15 - coffee break

18:15-20:00 - Another Family?

Family policy should be consistent with the aims and aspirations of diverse family models within any given society and encompass transformations of a modern family model which becomes often a form of different partner relationships. Even though politicians often try to impose concrete solutions and to promote very traditional family model, the state should be able to respond to the changes which take place in modern society. Different social actors should become the subjects of family policy so that they could be able to fully access the programs offered in the proposed instruments and not to be excluded on ideological grounds.

- What normative expectations as to family form the basis of the debate on family in particular countries? What does the process of redefining family in "new" and "old" EU countries look like?
- To what extent do the proposed models of family policy mirror the changes in structure and role of the modern family?
- Can a debate on the role and models of a family be led in a way which does not value one model over another one?
- How (regardless of ideological backgrounds behind different models of family policy) should one construct solutions which will not exclude people who do not follow the ideological expectations of a particular political project? What are the expectations of "new" and "old" member states in this respect?

Experts' debate:

- **Kinga Dunin**, Warsaw University;
- **Eberhard Schäfer**, Papa Institute, Berlin (Germany)



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Commentary:

- **Joanna Kluzik-Rostkowska**, Minister of Labour and Social Policy (Poland);
- **German model of family policy** - the representative of governmental institution (Germany);
- **Michaela Marksova-Tominova**, Chairwoman of the Association for Equal Opportunities, former Director of Department for Family Policy and Gender Equality, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Czech Republic.

Moderation: **Edwin Bendyk**, "Polityka"

The Project: "Fit for Gender Mainstreaming - Gender-Sensitive Transcending of Borders between East and West"

This EU-sponsored project (12/2006 to 02/2008) involves project partners from the European countries: Poland, Czech Republic, Austria and Germany. Based on cross-border qualification initiatives for multipliers and public events in all countries participating in the "East-West Dialogue" the goal is to advance gender mainstreaming strategies on a local level and enhance exchanges of experience and qualifications. The core approach is learning together in and from Europe.

Project Partners:

Heinrich Böll Foundation - Gunda-Werner-Institute for Feminism and Gender Democracy and Regional Offices in Warsaw, Prague and Brussels
Network of East West Women Gdansk, Poland
Gender Studies o.p.s., Prague, Czech Republic
Grüne Bildungswerkstatt (GBW), Viena, Austria



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