Handbook of Quality of Life in the Enlarged European Union

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Publication details
Chiara Saraceno
Published online on: 29 Nov 2007

How to cite: Chiara Saraceno. 29 Nov 2007, Patterns of family living in the enlarged EU from: Handbook of Quality of Life in the Enlarged European Union Routledge
Accessed on: 19 Jan 2019

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Patterns of family living in the enlarged EU

Chiara Saraceno

Introduction: A history of diversity

Patterns of family formation and family living have a long history of diversity throughout Europe (e.g. Reher 1998; Therborn 2004). Diversity in marriage rates, age at marriage, family structures, fertility, gender relations and intergenerational power relations continues to exist. These historical differences shape patterns of change and the impact of external pressures on existing family arrangements. To some degree, they also inform the way in which needs are understood and how responsibility for these needs is allocated between individuals, families and other social actors, including the welfare state. As a consequence, difference, rather than convergence, seems to be the persistent feature of family arrangements even within the limited space of Europe. An analysis performed for the Council of Europe in 2001, for instance, concluded that ‘The results of this analysis show that some demographic patterns are diverging (fertility quantum, fertility and marriage timing); others are geographically unchanged (divorce and out-of-wedlock births) even if their levels are different, and there is no tendency towards convergence’ (Pinnelli et al. 2001:16). In their overview of changes in family patterns across Europe since the sixteenth century, Barbagli and Kertzer (2003) argue that at the beginning of the twentieth century there remained enormous differences in patterns of family formation among the various regions of the European continent. According to their reading, the twentieth century, differently from the preceding ones, was actually marked primarily by convergence. Yet, at the end of the twentieth century, although differences had diminished, substantial differences remained in the ways in which ‘families are formed, transformed and divided, and in the relations of family members and of more distant kin’ (Barbagli and Kertzer 2003: xxxviii). Differences in particular involve the role of marriage and its relationship to both sexuality and fertility, fertility rates, patterns of intergenerational exchange, gender relations and arrangements.

These differences underline what Therborn (2004:11), looking at the world as a whole, defined as ‘geo-cultures’: ‘To view family systems as geo-cultures means to treat them as institutions or structures taking their colouring from customs and traditions, from the history of a particular area, a cultural wrapping which may remain after structural, institutional change, leaving imprints in the new institution.’ Thus, for instance, the delay in leaving the parental home in Italy is certainly a contemporary device used by the young and their families to deal with a weak welfare state and a rigid housing market. But this behaviour has its roots in a historical pattern of
family formation according to which many Italian men in the centre-north regions until the first decades of the twentieth century never exited the parental household. If and when they married, they brought their wife into the parental household (Barbagli et al. 2003).

Many authors have offered their own reading of this diversity. In a famous essay, John Hajnal (1982) identified two broad areas within Europe, on the basis of three criteria: prevalence of the nuclear, rather than the complex, family; degree of universality of marriage; and age at marriage for women. East of the conceptual line that runs from St Petersburg to Trieste, in what Hajnal called the Eurasian marriage pattern, the incidence of complex households has been substantial for many centuries. In these countries marriage also was virtually universal, and the age at marriage for women was lower than in western European countries. The complex household was almost absent in western European countries, particularly in Scandinavia, the Netherlands, England and northern France. It was present – mostly in the form of the stem family, as observed by Frédéric Le Play (1875), in southern Austria, some parts of Germany and in the rural areas of northern and central Italy, but not in southern Italy.

More recently, David Reher (1998) has pointed to another aspect of diversity: the relevance of, and embeddedness in kinship ties. In the Mediterranean countries, irrespective of the household structure (nuclear, stem or extended), households traditionally have been embedded in and dominated by a dense kinship network to a degree very different from that found in northern European households, even in the past. According to Reher, within Europe at least three general patterns of family formation and arrangement may be found up to the twentieth century. The first was prevalent in the central-western and Nordic countries. Here, individuals married late, at a comparatively lower rate, and had fewer children; moreover, couples were relatively unstable and had loose ties with their kinship network. The second was prevalent in some parts of southern Europe. Here, households also were nuclear, but people married earlier and at a relatively higher rate, households were embedded in dense kinship networks. The third pattern was prevalent in eastern European countries and the Balkans, as well as in parts of southern Europe (e.g. rural central and northern Italy). Households were complex, and age at marriage for women often was comparatively low. As a result, gender asymmetry was sharp, and the fertility rate was high.

Hajnal’s and Reher’s typologies partly overlap, but also partly differ, designing different boundaries in traditional patterns of family formation across Europe, depending on the specific dimension of family arrangements on which they focus. They do, however, share the idea that family arrangements belong to the longue durée and involve some kind of cultural path dependence. Past differences, therefore, shape also patterns of change.

To stress the relevance of long-standing arrangements in family formation and cultures does not mean that one ignores history and the relevance of changing social, economic and political conditions. Rather, the approach suggests that the impact of social, economic and political conditions on family arrangements is to some degree dependent on these arrangements themselves. This (inter)dependence helps explain the substantial differences that even today can be found across Europe in family patterns – including gender and intergenerational arrangements. It may also partly explain differences in welfare arrangements (see also Bahle, this volume Ch. 4). One might argue that long-standing family cultures offer different resources to deal with new problems or opportunities.
These differences are not obliterated by the construction of the EU as a political and social entity. Rather, they enter, more or less explicitly, into the formal and informal negotiations and confrontations through which Europe as a supra-national body is constructed, shaping country-specific understandings of common goals and priorities, as in the case of what civil and social rights are about, or of gender equality. They are relevant not only for demography but for understanding patterns of everyday organisation, such as dealing with needs of income and care, for gender and intergenerational relations, and for the division of labour and responsibilities.

This chapter is largely based on a new comparative source: the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS), performed in 2003 on the 15 old EU member states, the 10 new member states and three countries that have applied for EU membership: Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey. This dataset has its limitations and does not allow for a full exploration of the range of possible variations in patterns of family formation and living. Yet the EQLS data do offer a rich, cross-sectional picture of what kinds of households Europeans live in and of how they organise their everyday life in dealing with their needs for income and care. The following analysis starts with the political and institutional divide that stems from the different timing of access to the EU – the EU-15, the new member states, and the three countries which have applied for membership – and then moves towards a deeper exploration of differences in patterns of family formation. In the last section, the analysis addresses differences in gender arrangements and, more specifically, in the gendered division of labour – a crucial contemporary difference in family arrangements.

1. Patterns of family formation in the European Union: an overview

Within the ‘old’ 15 European Union member states (hereafter, ‘EU-15’), the main divide is between the northern European pattern, including the United Kingdom, and the southern European one, with the central European countries somewhere in between. The first group of countries for a long time had a marriage pattern that can be characterised as late, with a comparatively high percentage of the population who never marries. Until the 1970s, it also exhibited the lowest fertility rates in Europe; it now has the highest, together with Ireland and France. It also is the first group of countries where cohabitation as a pattern of first couple-formation emerged in the late 1970s and then spread, to become the most common pattern. Women’s labour force participation rates already were comparatively high in the 1960s. In comparison, in southern European countries the young, in particular young men, always have exited the parental household latest, and mostly only to marry. The gender differentials in age at marriage and the marriage rates have traditionally been higher here than in the northern countries, although in recent years the latter has been declining. Moreover, after having been the countries with the highest fertility rates, they now compete with eastern European countries (and Japan) for lowest fertility. Still, in these countries, marriage instability rates are comparatively low, as are labour force participation rates among women.

EU enlargement is progressively including within the EU boundaries such countries as Estonia, which clearly lie west of Hajnal’s divide; countries such as Hungary, Poland, Latvia and Lithuania, which are on the border of this divide; and still others, such as Slovenia, Cyprus and, even more clearly, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey.
which lie east of that divide. Whatever their positions with regard to this divide, most of these countries share some of the features of the so-called eastern European model: nearly universal marriage, a low age at marriage for women, and high fertility (Council of Europe 2001:55–76). In 1985, the marriage rates in Communist Eastern (excluding Russia) and Central Europe were, respectively, 0.88 and 0.90, compared to 0.83 in Greece, 0.79 in Portugal and 0.70 in Austria and West Germany. Fertility, including non-marital fertility, also was higher in these countries than in Western Europe. The pattern of universal marriage and a comparatively low age at marriage for women persisted, particularly in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Hungary, until the generation born after 1955 (see also Tomka 2002). Due to widespread impoverishment since the end of communism, marriage rates have declined sharply, as have fertility rates. According to some analyses (e.g. Therborn 2004), however, this phenomenon reflects a conjuncture of events: marriage rates will pick up again, remaining on average higher than in Western Europe.

In addition to fertility, marriage rates and age at marriage, another aspect showing variation in the past, but particularly at present, is a mother’s partnership situation at first birth. According to the data of the United Nations Fertility surveys in the 1990s (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe 2002), substantial differences exist across Europe, reflecting in part historical differences. In the Netherlands, Belgium, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Spain, Italy and Greece, between 89 per cent and 95 per cent of first-time mothers were married. In another group of countries (Finland, France, western Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia), the percentage was between 70 per cent and 85 per cent. In Norway it was 62 per cent, in Austria 56 per cent. In Denmark and Sweden it was well below half of all mothers: 26 per cent and 32 per cent, respectively. These two countries had the highest percentage of first-time mothers in an unmarried partnership (50 per cent and 58 per cent, respectively), followed at a distance by Norway (23 per cent), France (20 per cent), Austria (18 per cent), Finland (16 per cent) and Slovenia (15 per cent). Denmark also had the highest percentage of single mothers (24 per cent), followed by western Germany (19 per cent), Norway (15 per cent), Slovenia (15 per cent) and Poland (15 per cent). Poland, Greece and Lithuania had the lowest percentages of first-time mothers in a cohabitant unmarried partnership (1–2 per cent), followed by Spain, Italy, the Czech Republic and Belgium (3–5 per cent). With the exception of Denmark and Sweden, with Norway following at a distance, no clear Nordic pattern can be found in these data. Within the continental countries, a similarity emerges in that a substantial minority of first-time mothers are in a cohabitant unmarried partnership. But the incidence of both single and married first-time motherhood varies. The Mediterranean pattern of the prevalence of first-time motherhood within marriages is clearer. The pattern in most central-eastern European countries resembles the Mediterranean one with regard to the dominance of married first-time motherhood and the very low incidence of first-time mothers in cohabitant unmarried partnerships. But the incidence of single motherhood is higher. Furthermore, by 2002, Estonia had the second-highest extramarital fertility rate in Europe. Latvia and Bulgaria also were among the ten European countries with the highest fertility rate for unmarried mothers (e.g. higher than that in the United Kingdom; Council of Europe 2004).

The risk of a marriage breaking up also varies substantially across Europe, ranging from one in ten (in the Mediterranean countries) to one in two (in the
Scandinavian countries). In 2002, Sweden, Belgium, Luxembourg, Finland, Estonia, the Czech Republic and Austria were among the ten countries with the highest rate of divorce, whereas Turkey, Spain, Italy, Croatia and Spain had the lowest divorce rate in Europe (Council of Europe 2004).

Given these differences, the incidence of specific household patterns at a given point in time varies across countries. Not all countries use the same definition of the household in their statistics, despite the guidelines both of the United Nations and of Eurostat. Therefore comparisons are not always precise. The main differences concern whether a household is defined primarily as a dwelling unit or as a housekeeping unit. Other differences pertain to the definition of family units within households, and whether there is an age limit to define the relationship between parents and children. This variation in definitions renders not fully comparable the official statistical data, including the census data (see, for example, De Vos and Sandefur 2002; Hantrais 2004). Differences in definition affect in particular the comparability of the data on unmarried cohabitant couples, lone parents, and extended and multiple households.

In the light of these methodological and conceptual difficulties, the EQLS data have the virtue of having been generated within the same conceptual framework. Households are primarily defined as dwelling units. Respondents were asked with whom they lived. Household types were reconstructed on the basis of these individual answers, focusing on whether or not a couple, children and/or other relatives were present in the household. There is no age limit in defining the parent–child relationship.

Within the EU-25 (the 25 EU member states as of 2004), only 35 per cent of European households include a couple with children of any age, compared to 54 per cent in the three other countries; 30 per cent include a couple only. 3 Lone parents comprise 8 per cent of all households. One-person households make up a quarter of all households, whereas extended households, in which (usually older) relatives live with a couple and their children, constitute a very small group (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Household patterns in an enlarged Europe (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country cluster</th>
<th>Living alone</th>
<th>Couple without children</th>
<th>Couple with children¹</th>
<th>Lone parent²</th>
<th>Extended or multiple household³</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU-15</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>NMS</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU-25</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC-3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EQLS 2003; layer %

Question HH3 (household grid): Now think about other members of your household, starting with the oldest: What is this person’s relationship to you?

Notes:
1 Includes unmarried children of all ages.
2 Includes all adults living with their children, irrespective of the children’s age, but without a partner or any other person.
3 Extended households include one or more relative, but there is only one conjugal couple. Multiple households include more than one couple.
However, the incidence of the latter household pattern reaches 10 per cent in the new member states, compared to just 2 per cent in the old EU-15, confirming indirectly the persistence of Hajnal’s long-standing geographical divide. Conversely, singleperson households and childless couples are fewer in number in the ten new member states (hereafter, ‘NMS’) than in the EU-15. They are even less common in the three other countries (hereafter, ‘CC-3’), which show a distribution of household patterns more similar to that of NMS than that of EU-15. Households in the NMS and CC-3 are also more likely to include unmarried children than are those in the EU-15.

These distributions suggest that different mechanisms of family formation are in place. The data do not, in fact, mean that most couples in Europe never have a child, nor that one fourth of the EU-25 population live alone throughout their entire adult life. Rather, the combination of increased life expectancy, low fertility rates, the widespread but diversified popularity of the nuclear household (in which each couple sets up its own household) and increasing marital instability opens up new household and individual life phases and/or renders old ones (e.g. the empty-nest phase) more prolonged and widespread. For instance, it is no longer widowhood alone that transforms a surviving spouse into a single person or a lone parent. The transformation also may occur through divorce or separation. Individual ‘household careers’ and the life courses of households have become more diversified, if not fragmented.

For this reason, the kinds of household that people live in during different phases of the life course is a more meaningful indicator of patterns of household formation than is the simple distribution of household types within and across countries. Although the EQLS data are not longitudinal, they do offer the possibility of comparing across countries, as well as across gender and economic circumstances, the kinds of household situations that individuals experience and the household statuses that they have at various ages. The household unit – whatever its definition – of course does not fully coincide with ‘living arrangements’. Some household units may simply represent an address and possibly a sleeping place, whereas the individuals inhabiting them may spend all or most of their day in other households. This is the case of elderly individuals who spend their day and eat their meals in one of their children’s households. In some cases, young adults may have their own dwelling, but are supported financially by their parents, often eating their meals with them and having their laundry done by their mothers. More generally, ‘living arrangements’ may involve more or less frequent exchanges and relationships within the kinship network. As recent research has shown, kinship – particularly intergenerational ties – is a crucial practical as well as emotional resource throughout Europe (e.g. Kohli et al. 2005; Ogg and Renaut 2005). The EQLS data also testify that contacts with kin are frequent. Moreover, kin is the main resource for expected or received practical support in all countries, irrespective of household patterns and of welfare regime type or political history (Saraceno et al. 2005).

‘Households’, therefore, do not fully coincide with ‘families’ in the practices and understanding of most people. Yet households define some kind of boundaries within kinship networks. Specific household patterns, therefore, define those boundaries, and the need and the possibilities to cross them, in different ways.

One difference concerns the experience of living alone or with others. The highest percentage of adult individuals living with someone else is found in CC-3 (91 per cent), the lowest in EU-15 (75 per cent), with NMS in between (85 per cent). Within the
EU-15, however, the Mediterranean countries are more similar to the NMS than to the central and Nordic European countries.

Not surprisingly, whereas the households of those in the middle age-groups are more similar across countries, the biggest differences across countries and country clusters are found among the young and the elderly. These differences throw a light on distinct patterns of family formation and household experience along the entire lifecycle. When children leave the parental household late or, in some cases, bring their spouse or partner into it, adults in their mature and older years may spend many years living in the same house as their adult children. Some will become old and die while still living with them. Many lone mothers in Mediterranean countries, for instance, are neither unmarried single mothers nor separated or divorced ones. They are widows still living with their unmarried adult children. On the contrary, when children exit the parental household early, the adults in their mature years are likely to live many years as a childless couple or, particularly when old, as a single person. The kinship network is affected by these patterns, for in some cases the parents of both partners live in different households. In other cases, one set of parents (or one parent only), and sometimes other relatives, live with the couple and even with grandchildren. Although the kin network is larger than any kind of extended or multiple household and nuclear households and even single individuals may be embedded in dense kinship networks, demands and forms of support, patterns of giving and receiving across kinship networks are affected by patterns of family formation and household structure in the different phases of life.

2. Patterns of family formation when young

Throughout Europe, the formation of a married or unmarried cohabitant couple and the beginning of parenthood – events traditionally marking completion of the transition to adulthood – normally follow the individual’s exit from the parental home. Yet for a small number of the young, the couple is formed within the parental household of one of the partners. This phenomenon is more evident, as one might expect, in some of the eastern European countries, such as Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania and Cyprus, but also in Ireland. Thus, for a proportion of the young in these countries, family support in ‘forming a new family’ occurs in the form of including a child’s partner in the household.

On average, in the EU-15 the young become parents later than in the NMS and the candidate countries. They do, however, leave the parental household at a younger age. Young persons in the CC-3 leave the parental household later than in the EU-15, but earlier than in the NMS, and they also become parents earlier. The largest cross-country differences among the young concern the percentages of those who still live as children in the parental household.

Within the EU-15, differences are substantial for both genders, but particularly for men. The incidence of men under 35 years of age still living in the parental household, without a partner or children, ranges from 12 per cent in Sweden to almost 6 times as much, 67 per cent, in Italy. The other Mediterranean countries score 20 percentage points less than Italy. Greece is more similar to France and Luxembourg than to Italy. Only Malta, in the new member states, has a percentage similar to the Italian one. The other new member states range from 36 per cent for Estonia to 57 per cent for Slovakia. The CC-3 are similar to the higher end of the NMS spectrum (excluding Malta) (see Table 2.2).
Table 2.2 Household statuses of the young in Europe (ages 18–34) (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Status</th>
<th>Austria Men</th>
<th>Austria Women</th>
<th>Belgium Men</th>
<th>Belgium Women</th>
<th>Denmark Men</th>
<th>Denmark Women</th>
<th>Finland Men</th>
<th>Finland Women</th>
<th>France Men</th>
<th>France Women</th>
<th>Germany Men</th>
<th>Germany Women</th>
<th>Greece Men</th>
<th>Greece Women</th>
<th>Ireland Men</th>
<th>Ireland Women</th>
<th>Italy Men</th>
<th>Italy Women</th>
<th>Luxembourg Men</th>
<th>Luxembourg Women</th>
<th>Netherlands Men</th>
<th>Netherlands Women</th>
<th>Portugal Men</th>
<th>Portugal Women</th>
<th>Spain Men</th>
<th>Spain Women</th>
<th>Sweden Men</th>
<th>Sweden Women</th>
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Source: EQLS 2003; layer % HH3c: ‘Now think about other members of your household, starting with the oldest: What is this person’s relationship to you?’

Notes: The category ‘Living with parents’ includes all respondents without a partner and childless, who are living with parents with or without other aggregate members. The category ‘Other kind of household’ includes the respondents who live with friends, brothers or sisters (without parents) or other aggregate members.
Turkey has the highest, Malta the lowest percentage of young women who are mothers: respectively, 48 per cent (including those living with a partner and children in an extended household) and 12 per cent. Ireland, the United Kingdom, Austria and Lithuania have the highest percentages of lone mothers (15–13 per cent; living alone or in an extended household) in this age group; Greece and Malta have the lowest, followed by Italy. Sweden has a percentage close to that of Spain and much lower than that of Denmark. The former socialist countries have comparatively high percentages. Thus, the EQLS data indirectly confirm findings based on demographic sources: the rise in natural births is accompanied by a rise in lone motherhood in some countries, such as the former socialist ones and some western European ones as diverse as Ireland, the United Kingdom, Portugal, the Netherlands and Denmark (though not others, such as Sweden, where natural births tend to occur within a cohabitant couple relationship).5

If one examines two of the dimensions which in the literature are considered to be crucial dimensions both for entering adulthood and for forming a family – exiting the parental household and forming a partnership – three patterns may be distinguished (see Figure 2.1 for these patterns among young men).6 They confirm the patterns described by Alessandro Cavalli and Olivier Galland (1996) for the EU-15 only (see also Billari and Wilson 2001, Schizzerotto and Lucchini 2004). The patterns are clearer among men than among women.

In the first pattern, prevalent in the Nordic countries, Germany, Austria, Belgium, France and the United Kingdom, as well as in Greece,7 a substantial number of young people is outside the parental household by the age of 34. They either live alone as singles, particularly if they are males, or live with a partner, with or (more often) without children. Among young Swedish and German men 44 per cent and 40 per cent live by themselves, respectively, compared to 12 per cent and 21 per cent who still live at home with their parents.

In the second pattern, prevalent in the southern European countries and in the new member states, around half, and sometimes more, of those under 35 years old are still in the parental household without a cohabiting partner, particularly if they are male. For example, 67 per cent of Italian and Maltese young men, 57 per cent of Slovakian, 55 per cent of Polish and over 40 per cent of Portuguese and Spanish young men are still living in the parental home at the age of 34, without a partner. These households usually are nuclear, but, particularly in the NMS and in CC-3, for a small number they are extended; that is, other relatives (usually one or more grandparents or a sibling’s spouse) also are present.8 If they are outside the parental household, the young are more likely than in the former pattern to be already in a partnership and, particularly if female, to have one or more children.

The third pattern concerns a smaller group of the young in all countries; it is particularly concentrated in the NMS and the CC-3, but also plays a significant role in Ireland. In this case, when the young form a partnership, they remain in the parental household or enter the partner’s parental household, which sometimes includes other relatives as well.

In all three patterns, women generally enter a partnership and become parents earlier than do men. In comparison with men, they are less likely to live as childless singles, but more likely to live as a lone parent, either alone with their child or children, or together with their parents in an extended household.

As Cavalli and Galland (1996) have indicated, the three patterns of family formation found among young Europeans involve different kinds of exchange and forms of
Figure 2.1 Household status of young men (18–34): three distinct patterns (%)
Source: EQLS 2003

Question

HH3c: ‘Now think about other members of your household, starting with the oldest: What is this person’s relationship to you?’

Notes: The category ‘Living with parents’ includes all respondents without a partner and childless, who are living with parents with or without other aggregate members. The category ‘Other kind of household’ includes the respondents who live with friends, brothers or sisters (without parents) or other aggregate members.

The ‘early exit’ pattern includes Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

The ‘late exit’ pattern includes Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain.

The ‘partnering in a parental household’ pattern includes Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Romania and Turkey.
support across families and kin, as well as different options available for the young. An individual’s ability to leave the parental household early may be supported by cultural values, but also by favourable labour and housing markets as well as by welfare state provisions. If, however, the family is the main financial resource for the young and the housing market is tight, it is more difficult for a young person to leave the parental household when he or she is not yet established in the labour market. Moreover, it may be more costly for parents to help children live on their own. And, finally, if the family culture does not support the extended household pattern, or if parents are unwilling to accept a child’s spouse into their household, the young must wait not only to leave the parental household, but also to marry. The concentration of young couples living in an extended household in the countries east of Hajnal’s line, that is, in countries where the extended or multiple family pattern has a long tradition, confirms the substantial influence of historical, geo-culturally bounded family patterns.

Data on the occupational status of the young in different household circumstances and in different countries support the hypothesis that decisions about forming a new household are certainly influenced, but not dictated, by labour market and welfare

![Figure 2.2 Incidence of unemployment among European young singles living with their parents, by country](image)

Source: EQLS 2003, own calculations

state conditions. Actually, with the partial exception of Poland, the incidence of those who are neither in work nor in education is higher among the relatively few young persons who live without a partner and childless in the parental household in some of the ‘early exit countries’ (e.g. the United Kingdom) than among the more numerous ones in the ‘late exit’ countries (see Figure 2.2). Those who live with a partner, either with or without children, in an extended household are also more likely to be in paid work: 90 per cent in the NMS, slightly less in the EU-15 and CC-3. Thus, remaining in the household of one’s parents is not necessarily a means to buffer unemployment. It might be a means to integrate otherwise low wages, to accumulate capital for establishing a new family, or to support exploratory strategies in the labour market. Gender differences are evident, however: young women who are not in education and are still living in the parental household are generally more likely than men not to be working.

In sum, these cross-country differences suggest that paths into adulthood are shaped not only by available resources, such as publicly provided income support in the event of unemployment, scholarships for education, or access to housing. Cultural expectations about proper behaviour and the proper sequence of events are also involved.

3. Households of elderly persons

By around 2020, the main increase among elderly persons in the EU will occur within the over-80 group. This group will increase by about 50 per cent (European Commission 2003). The situation looks more balanced in the new member states, as their population is on average younger, but the trend is quite similar (Fahey and Spéder 2004). An increasing number of households will comprise only elderly people. Kinship networks will have an age and intergenerational balance skewed towards elderly people — with frail elderly persons constituting a crucial, if relatively small, proportion of them, who will have special needs and demands for care.

In which kind of household elderly persons live depends not only on their own past choices concerning marriage and/or cohabitation with a partner, divorce, having children and how many children they have had, at what age, and so forth. It depends also on patterns of household formation by the young: whether they bring their partner into the parental household or they form a new household, at what age they exit their parental household, and so forth. It depends, moreover, on gender, given women’s higher life expectancy on average, which, coupled with their younger age at marriage on average, makes it more likely for them than for men to outlive their partners into old age (see also Iacovou 2000, based on European Community Household Panel data).

Gender differences are systematic across countries. Throughout Europe, older men live with their partner to a much greater degree than older women. Conversely, older women live alone to a much greater degree than older men (see Figure 2.3). Thus, in old age there is a partial reversal of the pattern found among the young, among whom more men than women live alone. For instance, in Sweden and Denmark, over 70 per cent of older women live by themselves, compared to over 40 per cent of older men. In Portugal and Greece, over 55 per cent of older women live alone, compared, respectively, to 28 per cent and 10 per cent of older men. In Poland, the percentages

for women and men are, respectively, 39 per cent and 17 per cent; in Turkey, 23 per cent and 3 per cent. Fewer women than men still live with both their partner and their children. On the other hand, more women than men live with their children, whether or not these children have a partner, when they lose their own partner. This latter gender difference is particularly clear in NMS and CC-3, given the higher incidence of extended households in these countries. Cross-country differences are as important as gender differences. They do not, however, neatly overlap with any standard clustering based on tripartite EU membership, on Hajnal’s divide, or on patterns of family formation by the young (see Table 2.3). Certainly, the experience of living with one’s own children when old is nearly absent in such ‘early exit’ countries as Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, France and Germany. But in Austria and particularly in Greece, which share the same pattern, this experience is relatively widespread. As one might expect, the incidence of this

Figure 2.3 Households of elderly people: differences between men and women (65 and over) in the three clusters (%)

Source: EQLS 2003

Notes: The figure shows the relative differences between the household status of elderly men and that of elderly women (calculated as the difference between the % of elderly men who live in a given household status and the correspondent women’s % in the same household status). Negative differences show how much less men are in that status compared to women. Positive differences indicate how much less women are in that status compared to men. The category ‘Other kind of household’ includes those who live with relatives or other people, but no partner or children.
**Table 2.3** Elderly men and women (65 and over) living with their children;¹ by patterns of family formation by the young² (country %)

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<thead>
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<th>Patterns of family formation by the young</th>
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<td>Turkey</td>
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Source: EQLS 2003

Notes:
1 All elderly persons living as a couple with children (in a nuclear or extended household) and lone parents living in a nuclear or extended household.
2 See Figure 2.1.
3 N < 15.

The household situation is highest in the ‘late exit’ and the ‘partnering in a parental household’ countries, but with notable internal differences. Within the former, Poland...
households – countries, but with notable internal differences. Within the former, Poland, Malta and Italy have substantially higher percentages than do Portugal and Estonia. Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain and Hungary lie in between. Differences are even greater within the third group of countries, ranging from almost half of all elderly persons in Turkey living with their children – whether or not the children have a partner – to 13 per cent in the Czech Republic.

This ‘fuzziness’ of clusters is probably due to the fact that household patterns in old age are the outcome both of patterns of household formation by the current younger cohort and of their own cohort’s specific socio-cultural and demographic
histories: marriage rates, age differentials at marriage, fertility, mortality and migration. The interplay of all these phenomena may offer different household ‘options’ when old, even within otherwise similar geo-cultural patterns of family formation. Furthermore, life expectancy varies significantly across Europe. Sweden, Italy, Cyprus, Greece and Norway are among the ten countries with the highest life expectancy for men in Europe (at 76–79 years). Romania, Lithuania, Turkey, Latvia, Estonia and Ukraine are among the ten with the lowest life expectancy, ranging from 63 to 67 years. For women, Sweden and Italy are still in the first group, which also includes Spain, France, Finland and Austria (at 83–84 years). Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine and Turkey are still together in the lowest expectancy group, at 71 to 76 years (Council of Europe 2004).

Given these differences in household patterns, a different proportion of elderly people in each country, as well as of women in all countries, may find themselves living alone when they become frail. This situation puts a different kind of pressure both on family and kinship solidarity and on welfare arrangements. In the EQLS, this issue has not been dealt with in detail. There was one question asking how often the respondent took care of an elderly or disabled relative (with no distinction made between co-resident relatives and relatives living elsewhere). Provision of care for elderly persons is higher in the NMS and CC-3 than in the EU-15, and also involves to a greater degree adults of all ages, not just those over 54 years old (Saraceno and Olagnero 2004). Of the entire sample, 5 per cent assumes such an obligation daily (with more women than men taking on this responsibility), another 5 per cent at least once a week, and the remainder less often. But over half of the sample never takes care of an elderly or disabled relative. This last figure is higher than that found in Eurobarometer data (Alber and Kohler 2004).10 In her study based on European Community Household Panel (ECHP) data, Maria Iacovou (2000) found that a large proportion of elderly persons living with their children receives care within the household, particularly in the Mediterranean countries. She also found that this care is to a large degree reciprocal, particularly in the case of women: the ‘younger old’ among them, in fact, provide childcare almost to the same extent as care is provided by the household to the ‘older old’. This reciprocity does not hold for men, however. Recent research on a smaller number of countries with a specific focus on the issue of intergenerational exchanges (Kohli et al. 2005) indicates that between 40 per cent and 65 per cent of those over 80 receive some kind of help (care, but also help with shopping or with bureaucratic work) from their co-resident or non-co-resident children. Contrary to many assumptions implicit in welfare regime typologies, elderly people living in Mediterranean countries do not seem to receive more help from their family than do those living in Nordic and central European countries. Welfare state regimes possibly make a difference not so much in availability of family support as in the degree to which these exchanges and forms of support are the only, or main, available option, or even a necessity.

4. Household patterns in middle adulthood (35–64)

By age 35, about 90 per cent of all Europeans live outside their parental household. The large majority lives with a partner, with or without children. There are, however, noticeable differences with respect to gender and age (see Figure 2.4). Up to 49 years of age, more men than women live alone, either because they have not yet formed a
partnership or because they have left it. More women than men are lone parents. Actually, these two household statuses are somewhat symmetrical, suggesting that to some degree they are gender-specific outcomes of the process of partnership dissolution, particularly when children are present. Women are more likely to remain with the children. Men are more likely to leave the household to form a new one as a single person household, at least temporarily. Compared to younger women, 35- to 49-year-old lone mothers are less likely to ‘go back’ to, or remain in, their parents’ household.

Figure 2.4 Households of 35- to 64-year-olds: differences between the 35–49 and the 50–64 age groups, by gender and country clusters (%) Source: EQLS 2003, own calculations

Notes: The figure represents the relative differences between the household statuses of, respectively, (a) men in the 50–64 and 35–49 age groups and (b) women in the 50–64 and 35–49 age groups. The difference has been calculated as that between the % of 50–64-year-old men who have a given household status and the correspondent % in the 35–49 age group; the same calculation has been carried out for the women’s sample. Negative differences indicate how much less 50–64-year-old men (or women) are in that status compared to 35–49-year-old men (or women). Conversely, positive differences indicate how much less 35–49-year-old men (or women) are in that status compared to 50–64-year-old men (or women). The category ‘Other kind of household’ includes the respondents who live with friends, brothers or sisters (without parents) or other aggregate members.
There are fewer lone mothers living in extended households in this age group. These findings are similar to those from a study on the EU-15, which was based on ECHP data and used a more restricted definition of lone parenthood (i.e. the lone parent lives only with her or his dependent children; see Lehmann and Wirtz 2004). According to this study, in 2001 lone-parent households made up 9 per cent of all households with dependent children in the EU-15, ranging from 22 per cent in Sweden and 17 per cent in the United Kingdom to 4 per cent in Italy, Portugal and Greece and 3 per cent in Spain. Over 90 per cent of lone parents were women. Only in Sweden were 26 per cent of lone parents men. Of the lone parents in the EU-15, 86 per cent were between the ages of 25 and 49. Only in Greece and Portugal was there a relatively high proportion of lone parents in the age group 50–64 years: 23 per cent and 22 per cent, respectively, compared to an average of 11 per cent. These differences in the incidence of lone parenthood imply differences in the risk that European children have of spending part of their childhood and/or adolescence with only one cohabitant parent. Furthermore, some national research reported by Linda Hantrais (2004:59) suggests that children are likely to spend a longer period of time in a lone-parent household if their parents divorce than if one parent dies or a cohabitant unmarried partnership breaks up. In the EQLS sample, 14.2 per cent of under age children lived in a lone parent household in EU-15, 11.9 per cent in NMS and 8.4 per cent in CC-3. The highest percentages were found in the UK (26.5 per cent) and Estonia, the lowest in Malta. But the numbers are too small to allow any analysis.

By the age of 50, the effect of gender differences in life expectancy and in age at partnering starts reversing the differences in household statuses found among the 35- to 49-year-olds. The pattern that is so clear among elderly people starts to emerge: now women have a slightly higher likelihood than men to live alone. They continue to have a higher likelihood to be lone parents, but their children are now likely to be young adults. Thus, although they spend much of their adult life together, women and men shift their differences over the lifecourse. Or rather, their differences change sign: men are more likely to live alone when young; women are more likely to live alone when old. This is also the age at which an increasing percentage of people, particularly women, is involved in the care of a frail elderly person, cohabitant or not.

In no country cluster is there a substantial percentage of 35- to 64-year-olds who live in an extended, three-generation household. This circumstance may be a lifecourse effect. As individuals age, it is less likely that their parents are still alive, while their cohabiting children may not have yet formed a partnership. Yet, given the present high life expectancy, this explanation is at best partial. In fact, although among the 50- to 64-year-olds the percentage of those who still have a child in the household decreases dramatically, the percentage of those who are in an extended household increases only slightly. Rather, this finding seems to suggest that, even in the countries where it once was widespread, the extended household pattern has been weakened as a model among the cohorts who are at present in the middle age groups. It remains, however, as a buffer or a necessity, in two phases of household formation: when the young couple does not have enough resources to set up its own household, and when elderly persons become frail and remain alone. Moreover, although co-residence between more than two generations may not be the prevalent pattern of family organisation, exchanges and support across households within the family network may be a crucial organisational as well as emotional resource. Other comparative research has indicated that it is particularly this age group, the so-called pivot generation that
is most likely to give financial support and care both to the older and to the younger generations (Attias-Donfut et al. 2005; Kohli et al. 2005).

5. One-worker and two-worker couples: another intra-European differentiation in patterns of household organisation?

Households are not simply a matter of who lives with whom when. Because households have to deal with needs of income and care, decisions concerning household organisation involve also decisions and arrangements concerning the allocation of paid and unpaid work, particularly within the couple (if one is present). These decisions, particularly as they affect women’s and mothers’ participation in paid work, increasingly differentiate households’ organisational patterns across Europe. As findings of the European Values Survey show (Halman 2001), the decisions certainly are influenced by cultural patterns regarding what is appropriate, particularly when there are small children in the family. But they also are contingent on welfare state and labour market arrangements.

As European employment surveys indicate, there are meaningful differences across Europe not only in women’s activity rates, but also in the degree to which motherhood has a negative impact on women’s labour force participation. The negative impact of having a child under six ranges from nearly 40 percentage points in the Czech Republic and Hungary to 3 percentage points in Denmark and minus 8 percentage points in Slovenia (see Plantega and Siegel 2004).

EQLS data indicate the considerable variation across Europe in the distribution of three possible paid-work arrangements within couples of working age – one worker only, two workers and no workers. Differences in this case seem to depend less on patterns of family formation than on welfare regime patterns (see Figure 2.5) and on gender models. The social democratic countries and the former socialist countries show a remarkably similar distribution. In these countries, in the large majority of working-age couples both partners work. The outlier is Poland, both because of the higher incidence of couples who do not work and because of the lower percentage of two-worker couples. In the continental countries, the majority of couples also consists of two workers, but the proportion of one-worker couples is higher than in the first two clusters. The Mediterranean countries appear to be quite differentiated. Cyprus and Portugal are similar to the continental countries, and in Spain, too, slightly over half of the couples have both partners in employment. In Italy and Greece, two-worker couples make up less than half of all couples of working age. Finally, in Malta, they represent a clear minority. Among the two countries usually identified with the liberal cluster, the United Kingdom is similar to Belgium and France, whereas Ireland is similar to Italy. With respect to the CC-3, Turkey has by far the lowest percentage of two-worker couples in all 28 European countries, as well as a relatively high percentage of couples with no workers. Bulgaria’s and Romania’s percentages of two-worker couples are similar to those of the continental countries. On the other hand, Romania has a higher percentage of couples with no workers than Poland does.

Two-worker couples may, however, combine quite different time schedules. European labour force surveys indicate that across Europe, on average, women work shorter days than men do, and that part-time work is largely women’s work, either
as an option during a certain life stage (e.g. in the early years of motherhood) or as a permanent condition. However, given the different incidence and availability of part-time work across Europe, couples with ‘one and one-half workers’ (Crompton 2006, Lewis 2003, Pfau-Effinger 1998, 2004) predominate in the continental countries and the United Kingdom, particularly when they have young children (Bielenski et al. 2002, Franco and Winqvist 2002, Plantega and Siegel 2004). They also make up a substantial proportion in the Nordic countries. Two full-time workers is the prevalent pattern in most of the former socialist countries. It is the prevailing pattern in the Mediterranean countries as well – when the couple has two earners – even though there is little support from the welfare state. This lack of support explains the relatively low, though increasing, proportion of two-earner households in the Mediterranean countries.

Household organisation is affected not only by the number of paid workers in the couple and by their paid working-time schedule, but also by the needs for care and by the gender division of unpaid family work (Saraceno 2005). With regard to the former, in most countries the presence of children, particularly when they are very

Figure 2.5 Distribution of working-age couples by working status in Europe
Source: EQLS 2003, own calculations
young, has a negative impact both on women’s activity rates and on their working time, but to a quite different degree across countries (e.g. Plantega and Siegel 2004). Parenthood impacts negatively on women’s participation far more in new member states than the EU-15: the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia are the three countries where women are most affected by parenthood. On the contrary the impact is non-existent in Sweden and minimal in Denmark. With regard to the gender division of labour, comparative time-use data on a number of European countries (Eurostat 2004; Sabbadini and Romano 2006) indicate that unpaid family work remains mainly women’s responsibility (see Table 2.4). When women are in paid work, however, they reduce their time devoted to family work, whereas their partners increase their share of it. In most countries studied, the overall (paid and unpaid) workingtime load is higher for working women than for working men, although men on average work more hours for pay than women do. This is not the case, however, in Sweden, Norway and the United Kingdom, although the balance between paid and unpaid work may differ between men and women. Estonian, Slovenian and Italian working women have the longest working day. Italian men have the longest paid working day and are the least collaborative in unpaid family work.

The EQOLS data are less precise. But they give information on a larger number of countries. Generally, they confirm the picture presented above. In particular, they suggest, on the one hand, that both the former socialist and the Nordic countries are the most gender equal with regard to the overall workload, particularly in two-worker couples. But whereas in the Nordic countries the overall workload for both men and women is among the shortest in Europe, in the former socialist countries it results in a very long working day for both. The Mediterranean countries appear to be the most unbalanced with respect to gender, both when households are based on the male breadwinner model and when they have two earners. Even when women work full time, the gender division of labour in family work remains skewed (Saraceno et al. 2005).

6. Conclusions

Households in Europe are differentiated in terms of who lives with whom when, timing and sequence of events (e.g. cohabitation, marriage, fertility, exit from the parental household and so forth). During the twentieth century there has been a noticeable convergence with regard to family structures, in so far as neo-locality prevails at present in the formation of households throughout Europe to a much greater extent than in the past. In addition, the widespread downward fertility trend has homogenised countries and social groups which previously had quite distinct patterns. Yet the timing of exit from the parental household and the sequencing of cohabitation, marriage and parenthood distinguish different clusters of countries that to some degree overlap with the north/south and east/west divides. This, in turn, has an impact on the average household size (greater in southern and eastern Europe) and on the likelihood that a substantial proportion of elderly people (particularly elderly women) live alone. At the same time, significant cross-country differences in marital instability rates and birthrates both out of wedlock and out of cohabitation shape different household and life course patterns for children.

There are also noticeable differences in the patterns of households’ time organisation and of dealing with needs for income and care. One of the main changes in
Table 2.4 Use of time among working Europeans (hours and minutes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Belgium</th>
<th>Estonia</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Hungary</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Slovenia</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
<th>UK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep</td>
<td>8:16</td>
<td>8:23</td>
<td>8:22</td>
<td>8:38</td>
<td>8:11</td>
<td>8:18</td>
<td>8:00</td>
<td>8:07</td>
<td>8:12</td>
<td>8:05</td>
<td>8:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>1:30</td>
<td>1:15</td>
<td>1:16</td>
<td>1:05</td>
<td>1:05</td>
<td>1:02</td>
<td>1:28</td>
<td>1:17</td>
<td>1:09</td>
<td>1:28</td>
<td>1:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>24:00</td>
<td>24:00</td>
<td>24:00</td>
<td>24:00</td>
<td>24:00</td>
<td>24:00</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|       |         |         |         |        |         |         |       |        |          |        |        |
| **Men** |         |         |         |        |         |         |       |        |          |        |        |
| Sleep  | 8:01    | 8:22    | 8:12    | 8:24   | 8:00    | 8:08    | 7:58  | 7:53   | 8:06     | 7:52   | 8:11   |
| Paid work and/or study | 5:03    | 5:05    | 5:32    | 5:44   | 5:05    | 5:25    | 6:13  | 4:56   | 5:20     | 5:17   | 5:42   |
| Unpaid family work | 2:15    | 2:20    | 1:59    | 1:53   | 1:52    | 2:09    | 1:10  | 2:12   | 2:24     | 2:23   | 1:54   |
| Travel | 1:43    | 1:20    | 1:17    | 1:10   | 1:31    | 1:10    | 1:40  | 1:23   | 1:14     | 1:32   | 1:36   |
| **Total** | 24:00   | 24:00   | 24:00   | 24:00  | 24:00   | 24:00   | 24:00 | 24:00  | 24:00    | 24:00  | 24:00  |

Sources: Eurostat 2004; for Italy: Sabbadini and Romano 2006. The years when the data were collected differ. For example, for France, they refer to 1998; for Italy, to 2003
family relationships over the past half century – women’s emancipation through education and labour force participation – appears to have a differential impact on household organisation across Europe depending both on previous arrangements and cultural models and on the ability of a society to adapt to this change. In the Nordic countries, the two-worker arrangement predominates, but when children are very young a good share of women chooses part time. Couples with one and one-half workers prevail in the continental countries and the United Kingdom, particularly when they have young children. Two full-time workers is the prevalent pattern in most of the former socialist countries as well as in the Mediterranean countries – when the couple has two earners. In the Mediterranean countries, however, this arrangement still pertains to just a minority of all working-age couples; moreover, the skewed gender division of labour remains unfavourable for women.

Particularly in the Mediterranean and the former socialist countries, households headed by adults in the middle age-groups may find themselves under considerable time pressure due to long working days and responsibilities to provide care that are little supported by the welfare state. Extended family solidarity may buffer these strains. But the declining fertility rate is creating a demographic context in which there will be an increasing care deficit for the older generations to come. In the former socialist countries, this care deficit might even be intensified by emigration. Furthermore, somewhat paradoxically, eastern European women as migrant care-workers in the EU-15, particularly in Mediterranean countries, are becoming the private market solution in welfare regimes that deal inadequately with the care deficit emerging from the interplay between population ageing and the increase in women’s labour force participation (Da Roit and Sabatinelli 2005). Yet the women filling these positions may open up this same deficit in their own countries. The ‘global care chain’, as it has been defined (Anderson 2000), might produce unbalances not only in individual and family lives, but also in demographic and social structures.

In any case, the brief story that has been told in these pages suggests that in family arrangements both differences and similarities do not always overlap with political and institutional divisions, even if these may crystallise them. It also suggests that in this field convergence is a somewhat illusionary (or moving) target. Families and societies interact with each other. The way the latter have adapted to challenges posed by changes in the former has been and continues to be as diverse across Europe as family forms themselves.

Notes

1 For instance, some crucial questions (e.g. whether a couple was married or cohabitant; whether a lone mother previously had been married) were not included in the questionnaire.
2 Exactly which country belongs to which part of the divide is controversial. For instance, Hajnal did not include Hungary in the eastern European model, but, according to Tomka (2002), Hungarian family arrangements bear a great similarity to aspects of this model, particularly with regard to age at marriage. According to De Vos and Sandefur (2002), the same holds for Slovakia, whereas Estonia is more similar to the Nordic pattern and the Czech Republic to the west-central European one.
3 Only 30 per cent of all households across Europe include at least an underage child.
4 In Bulgaria 32 per cent of all underage children live in an extended household, compared to slightly over 1 per cent in Denmark or the UK. In Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia and Poland the figure is over 15 per cent.
5 A study on lone parents in the EU-15, which was based on ECHP data (Lehmann and Wirtz 2004), found that Ireland was the country with the highest incidence of lone mothers in the youngest age bracket (16–24): 11 per cent compared to the average of 2 per cent.

6 In order to identify these patterns, an agglomerative hierarchical cluster analysis was used. With this procedure, homogenous cases are grouped in order to form clusters. The ‘complete linkage’ method was implemented. In this method, the distance between two clusters is calculated between their two farthest points (Lance and Williams 1967a, 1967b). In the sample of young women, these patterns are not clearly identifiable.

7 The data on Greece are somewhat surprising. It is the only case in which the EQLS data differ substantially from other sources that usually put Greece in the same group as the other Mediterranean countries.

8 Given the small number of these situations, for the purpose of this analysis I have grouped together all childless children without a partner who are living in the parental household, without distinguishing between those living in nuclear and those living in extended households.

9 In Italy, for instance, children of better-off households leave the parental household later than children of low-income households. So, too, do only children in comparison with children with siblings.

10 Cross-survey differences in findings on this issue may depend on different factors: age composition of the sample, wording of the question, and so forth. The issue of comparability in this field has been addressed in a review of European studies by Jacobs et al. (2005).

11 For the purpose of this analysis of household status, ‘lone parent’ includes all adults living with at least one child and no partner, irrespective of the child’s age.

References


