

The Role of Care Policies in Supporting Family Resilience



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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No Project 101060410 and Innovate UK, the UK's Innovation Agency.

Date: 4 February
2025

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Our Study of Family Resilience in Low-Resource Families (2022-2025)

- The evidence base:
- Focus groups with over 300 members of families in six countries (Belgium, Croatia, Poland, Spain, Sweden and UK)
- Statistical analyses of the risks facing different families in Europe
- Statistical analysis of family and employment related behaviours under different policy conditions
- Analyses of policies for all low-income families, for lone-parent families, for families with heavy caring responsibilities, for migrant families in the six countries
- Microsimulations of the effectiveness and reach of different policy reforms
- Analyses of how family is conceived in EU initiatives (especially the WLB, the Child Guarantee and the European Care Strategy)



Main Findings from Focus Groups

- Strong similarities across countries:
- Disadvantages cumulate and evolve over time so a more complicated understanding of resilience than response to shock needs to be developed
- People live lives that are marked by ongoing risks, vulnerabilities and the challenge of transitions
- These vulnerabilities relate closely to family-related considerations (pressures regarding caring, limited resources for caring)
- Families were very constrained in their actions, mainly absorbing pressures and losses rather than able to move their situation
- Policies provide resources but they also act as constraints (have we ever had proper care-related policies)



The Project's Framework of Family Resilience

- Family Resilience = **families' capacities to engage in family life, which involves care-giving especially for children, and to make the transitions from one stage of family life to another without incurring major risk**
- This depends on:
 - sufficient **resources being available and being managed well** - and we know there are inequalities and insufficiencies in both regards
 - compensating for **structural and experiential challenges** – especially lone parents, families with 'heavy care needs' and migrant families
 - enabling families to make **transitions** – across the life course (maturation of children, parents and grandparents) and between family and employment (being able to manage a changing care and employment mix)
 - Enabling families **to avoid large trade-offs in regard to care** and also to share care (with other institutions) and to manage the family-employment balance



A Care Perspective and a Care Trilemma

- Care is a different way of seeing family life – different to worklife balance for example
- A care perspective connects care for children and that for adults
- Care emphasises the capacities of people to provide for those they love, focuses on the ‘costs’ associated with care and recognises that all societies have both huge reliance on families and communities to provide care and probably provide too little support (or is not getting the support right)
- Results from research suggest a care trilemma which is an intersection of three types of scarcity: paid work that can be accommodated with care, too little money when paid work isn’t available; and time scarcities
- The result is people being faced with trade-offs in key decisions and behaviours around their family life
- However a resourcing care perspective also carries risks: too much reliance on informal care and gender-related inequalities



What Policies would Help

- Policy Goal: Adequately resource care
- What is needed for this?: A policy combination: Services (childcare and family support services); Adequate income support for care (children and adults); Adequate paid leaves from employment
- rEUsilience Proposals:
 - An adequate and universal system of child-related income support
 - Adequate, flexible and inclusive childcare and parental leave policies – closing the childcare gap
 - A network of family support services that are universal and easy to access and that offer general as well as specific family support

Thank You

Consortium members



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