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EESTI KÕRGKOOLIDEVAHELINE DEMOUURINGUTE KESKUS

ESTONIAN INTERUNIVERSITY POPULATION RESEARCH CENTRE

Erasmus University Rotterdam

FAMILY CONSTELLATIONS IN EUROPE

Puur, Allan

Sakkeus, Luule

Schenk, Niels

Põldma, Asta

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1 Demographic changes as the framework of formation of family constellations in Europe

Schenk, N.

The importance of one's family in times of need is unquestionable. Young children rely on their parents for proper living conditions, who in turn receive help from their aging parents in raising and caring for their children. There also comes a time when elderly parents themselves require assistance with household tasks or arranging nursing help. The importance of kin relationships sketched here is not limited to exchanges of practical support. The family is also an important source of emotional and social support during all stages of the life-course. Since the family is such an important resource for people during their entire life (Elder, 1974), changes in the make up of contemporary families associated with divorce, postponement of partnership and parenthood, and repartnering may pose risks for the degree to which people can call on their family for support.

Studying family composition and changes in the composition due to demographic processes is important since it provides an opportunity to look at how potentially needy persons are embedded in a family that is sufficiently equipped with family members able to take on a caring role. The demographic processes described below have persistent and long lasting effects on the makeup of families now and in the future. Showing how these processes have influenced families in Europe, and gauge how they will affect families in the future, provides a useful insight into if and how people in need of support will be able to rely on family members.

This first chapter briefly discusses the main demographic processes responsible for changes in family composition and how these processes have affected, and will affect, persons in different life-course stages. The second chapter discusses how changes in mortality and fertility are reflected in the generational structure of Europe's population at the macro level. It also provides an overview of how expected trends in mortality and fertility will affect Europe's generational structure in the future. In the third chapter, a micro-level perspective is taken. By using a large-scale demographically oriented survey, the Generations and Gender Survey, the availability of ascending and descending kin and

the embedment in multigenerational families is shown. Either due to diverging historical reasons or diverging developments in the demographic processes described below, the chapter shows how various regions – and even regions within regions – in Europe show a surprising variation in family constellations.

1.1 Mortality and fertility

In all European countries mortality and fertility rates have been changing dramatically over the course of several decades (Frejka & Sobotka, 2008; Vallin, Meslé & Valkonen, 2001). Mortality has declined mostly due to decreased exposure to risk such as infectious deceases, and due to improvements in social protection and health care (Schofield & Reher, 1991). Declines in fertility have been attributed to a wide range of causes, including increases in the standard of living which have reduced the need for children's contribution to household production, the introduction of reliable and easily available contraceptives, and rises in women's educational levels which have increased life options other than motherhood and homemaking (Morgan & Taylor, 2006).

The decline in mortality rates implies that newborns are much more likely to survive through childhood, children are less likely to be orphans, and elderly live considerably longer now compared to a few decades ago (Uhlenberg, 1980). Mortality improvements also imply that people spend more time in their roles of child, parent, and spouse (Watkins, Menken & Bongaarts, 1987). Based on the mortality rates alone, one would expect families to have more children than before. However, given concomitant decreases in fertility levels, of the fewer children that are born nowadays, more will survive through infancy.

When focusing on the elderly, increased longevity has the greatest influence. Elderly live longer now than before, which generally means that they spend a longer time in their position as (grand)parent. Important to note is that mortality and its decline differs considerably between men and women. In industrialized societies, women tend to live longer than men, but this difference has been declining over time United Nations, 1998; World Health Organization, 2001). Fertility rates do not affect the number of elderly in a

family (assuming there is one) as is the case of children; they only determine the size and number of generations of the families in which they are embedded.

1.2 Timing

Both marriage timing and childbearing timing strongly influence a family's structure. Irrespective of changes in the number of children born, the time at which parents choose to have children has changed dramatically in most societies. This especially has consequences for the age gap between parents and their children, also referred to as lineage depth (Matthews & Sun, 2006). In industrialized societies, parents increasingly delay the age at which they have their first child (Sobotka, 2004). In the Netherlands for example, the average age at which parents have children has increased from 26.4 in 1950 to over 29.4 in 2006 (CBS, 2009). Lineage depth should thus be apparent in family structures because grandparents will generally be older in societies with greater lineage depth. The gap between elderly and their children will only be greater when these processes have lasted for a considerable time. When considering both mortality and timing trends together, we see that the increased potential for longer durations of a specific life-stage position due to increases in life expectancy is not fully reached. Postponement of childbearing means that the number of years that elderly are grandparents is not fully extended by the number of years that they now live longer. It also means that elderly do not spend this prolonged time entirely as a parent (Watkins, Menken & Bongaarts, 1987).

1.3 Marriage, divorce and remarriage

Industrialized societies have seen a rapid increase in the occurrence of divorce and remarriage (Cherlin, 1992). These developments have an impact on qualitative aspects of family structure rather than quantitative aspects. People can rely on family members by virtue of having a long history of living together and by being based on shared genes. The obligation to care for family members is believed to be stronger for biological kin than for kin resulting from remarriage (Coleman, Ganong & Cable, 1997). Nowadays,

widowhood is not the only event leading to the dissolution of family ties. Long standing relationships between family members are increasingly often disrupted due to divorce. Remarriage after divorce often gives children new stepparents, while grandparents sometimes lose sight of their grandchildren. Biological kin exchange more help than do step family members. Parents, for example more strongly invest in biological children than in stepchildren (Hofferth & Anderson, 2003). It is conceivable that the magnitude of differences in support levels between step and biological family relationships varies by the degree of institutionalization of step families (Cherlin, 1978). In societies where divorce and remarriage are relatively longstanding phenomena, the differences between step families and biological families are likely to be smaller than in societies where these processes are relatively new and uncommon.

1.4 Temporal and Contextual differences

Although the demographic processes of increased longevity, decreased fertility, postponed childbearing, and increased divorce and remarriage are virtually universal, their impact greatly depends on the temporal and contextual factors specific to a given society. Differences between societies in family structures may appear because the magnitude of the impact of (some of) these processes has been greater or smaller, or it may be that these processes have not been present for a sufficiently long period of time to show any changes in family patterns at the country level. For example, Eastern European countries have not witnessed the declines in male mortality that is observed in most of the Western European countries. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the fall of communist regimes, sex differentials in mortality have widened dramatically, at a time when many other countries have witnessed sharply decreasing differences between male and female life expectancies (Nolte, McKee, & Gilmore, 2005). Thus, we should find East-West differences in the proportions of oldest-old elderly and in the sex ratio at advanced ages.

1.5 Who are at risk?

The size and composition of family constellations is relevant in view of support responsibilities and support provision. Members of the immediate family (partner, parents, and children) tend to be highly supportive, whereas grandparents, siblings, and cousins are more likely to serve as back-up supports (Dykstra, 1993; Wellman & Wortley, 1989). Knowledge about numbers and types of family members thus provide an indication of support potential. Care burden, on the other hand, can be conceived in terms of the balance between the number of very young and very old family members (dependents) and the number of members of the middle generations (carers). An inventory of family members can be used to identify persons at risk of being without the help they need, or at risk of being burdened by family obligations. Thus, knowledge about family constellations is important for forecasting and the creation of social policies and programs (Hagestad, 2000).

2 FAMILY CONSTELLATIONS IN EUROPE: long-term perspective from the macro level

Sakkeus, L., Puur.A., Põldma A.

2.1 Data sources and the analytical approach

The basis for the analysis comes from the data of the United Nations Population Division "The 2008 Revision of World Population Prospects", based on its online version (UN 2009). Although the UN database excludes some very small countries (with population less than 100 thousand people) and is perhaps not as accurate as the data that could be obtained from national sources, the main asset of the source is its broad coverage both in terms of countries and time. Conveniently, the time coverage stretches from the current date of 2005, for which point main indicators are presented, 50 years in both directions: into the past and future. The reference point of 2005 also coincides with the analysis of GGS countries at the micro-level, carried out in chapter 3.[1]

In the 2008 revision the projections of future population of each country start with an estimated population for 1 July 2010. Because population data are not necessarily available for that date, the 2010 estimate is derived from the most recent population data available for each country, obtained usually from a population census or a population register, projected to 2010 using all available data on fertility, mortality and international migration trends between the reference date of the population data available and 1 July 2010.

The 2008 revision of projections includes eight variants including low; medium; high; constant-fertility; instant-replacement-fertility; constant-mortality; no change (constant-fertility and constant-mortality); and zero-migration. Five of those variants differ only in respect to the level of fertility in each, that is, they share the assumptions made in respect to mortality and international migration. Our data is derived from the online version were the first four projection scenarios are available (UN 2009). However,

[1] In most GGS countries analysed at the micro-level, data was collected around 2005.

in the following analysis we mainly present outcomes from two scenarios: medium and constant fertility, differing exclusively in the assumptions made regarding the future path of fertility.

Our main subject of interest is the European region, which is represented by the countries belonging to the so-called low-fertility belt, i.e. countries with total fertility at or below 2.1 children per woman in 2005-2010. Fertility in low-fertility countries is generally assumed to remain below 2.1 children per woman during most of the projection period and reach 1.85 children per woman by 2045-2050. We are using two fertility assumptions, which are differentiated according to the group of countries the particular country belongs. In the *medium-fertility assumption*, total fertility in all countries is assumed to converge eventually toward a level of 1.85 children per woman. However, not all countries will reach this level during the projection period, that is, by 2045-2050.

Projection procedures differ slightly depending on whether the country had a total fertility above or below 1.85 children per woman in 2005-2010. For countries where total fertility was below 1.85 children per woman in 2005-2010, it is assumed that over the first 5 or 10 years of the projection period fertility will follow the recently observed trends in each country. After that transition period, fertility is assumed to increase linearly at a rate of 0.05 children per woman per each five-year period. Thus, countries whose fertility is currently very low may not reach a level of 1.85 children per woman by 2050. In case of *constant-fertility assumption* for each country, fertility remains constant at the level estimated for 2005-2010.

Both fertility assumptions used in our analysis apply *normal mortality assumption,* in which mortality is projected on the basis of models of change of life expectancy produced by the United Nations Population Division. The selection of a model for each country is based on recent trends in life expectancy by sex. In case of *normal-migration* assumption, which is applied in the chosen two scenarios, the future path of international migration is set on the basis of past international migration estimates and consideration of the policy stance of each country with regard to future international migration flows. Projected levels of net migration are generally kept constant over most of the projection period. A comparison of the results of the two scenarios applied in our

analysis allows an assessment of the effects that different fertility paths have on other demographic parameters.

The analysis follows the approach applied by Golini and Iacoucucci (2006) in "The demographic trends and intergenerational relationships". Generational structure is constructed from four 5-year age groups each standing 25 years apart: 0-4, 25-29, 50-54 and 75-79 representing "children", "parents", "grandparents" and "great-grandparents". On the basis of these groups we describe the interdependencies between generations by assuming that 0-4-and 75-79-age groups are those receiving care and 25-29 and 50-54-age groups are those providing care. As an analytical measure, ratios are mainly applied reflecting the relative number of population in different positions.

Although the indicators applied are relatively crude and simplify the reality of intergenerational interdependencies in a number of ways, we hope to provide a background for the following more refined analysis based on the individual data from Gender and Generation Surveys in selected countries. In our analysis we start with a general shift in generational structure of the population in Europe over the last 50 years, more specifically outlying the changing balance between generations potentially receiving and providing care. In the next sub-sections we concentrate on the gender differences and regional variations occurring over the same time span in these structures in Europe.

For describing gender differences, the difference in the dependency ratios of different generations, derived as the subtraction between female and male relevant indicator, is used. Assessing the impact of the diverse demographic developments across countries and regions of Europe, we are mainly describing the difference in four main regions of Europe from the average value of the relevant indicator for Europe as a whole. In distinguishing Northern, Western, Southern and Eastern Europe, the definition of the regions follows a conventional geographical approach that has been used in many studies (e.g. Frejka, Sobotka 2008). Northern Europe includes 5 Scandinavian countries, Southern Europe 6 Mediterranean countries (including Malta and Cyprus), Western Europe includes 11 countries, and Eastern Europe 23 countries. On a more refined level, we have distinguished in Western Europe 3 German-speaking countries into a separate

region and divided Eastern Europe further into 5 sub-regions (Baltic[2], Central[3], South-Eastern[4], CIS-4[5] and Caucasian region[6]).

Finally in our analysis we proceed with the projected perspectives of the demographic processes on further shifts in generational structure until 2050 outlined by two, medium- and constant-fertility projection scenarios. We assume that the chosen two scenarios of projection offer the timeframe in which the demographic processes in the highest probability are going to take place for Europe as a whole as well as for each of the specific countries, more specifically analyzed in the micro-level data.

2.2 Shifts in generational structure of the population

To present the main shifts in the generational structure of the population, we relate the size of the ascending generations systematically to that of the youngest one. In doing so, the youngest age group, children, serve as an anchor that allows us to capture the change in the shape of the generational tree. Also, we begin by looking at Europe as a whole, and at a later stage come to differences between regions and countries.

In the 55-year period covered by the data, the ratio of young adults to children has increased almost 1.7 times, from around 80% to 140% (Figure 2.1). Within that timeframe, the increase was not evenly spread. The upward trend started at around 1970 and concentrated in the three latter decades of the 20th century. The line at 100% indicates a balance between the number of young adults and children. It appears that until the late 1970s, children continuously outnumbered young adults whereas later the situation reversed. This shift is, of course, driven by decline in fertility and postponement of child-bearing as mortality was relatively low in these age groups already at the beginning of the observed period.

Moving one step upwards along the generational tree reveals a fairly similar pattern. In relative terms, the ratio of children to middle-aged adults (whom in the current

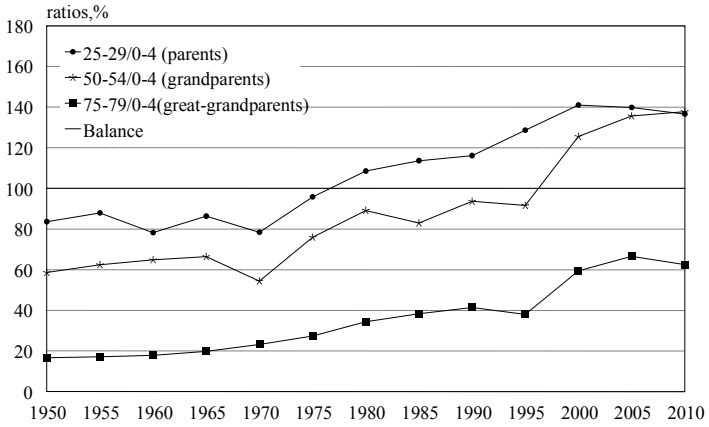
[2] Baltic region includes Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.
[3] Central Europe includes Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.
[4] South-Eastern Europe includes Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.
[5] Commonwealth of Independent States-4 (CIS-4) denotes four countries of former Soviet Union in the European region, namely, Russia, Byelorussia, Ukraine and Moldova
[6] Caucasian region includes Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

analysis we regard as grandparents) increased about 2.3 times since the beginning of the 1950s. The rise in the ratio of grandparents to children is much steeper than observed for the young adults. It has to be stressed that currently also the middle-aged population (or "grandparents") outnumber children in Europe. This switch in the balance of generations is a relatively recent phenomenon as the crossing of the 100%-line occurred in the late 1990s. But at the same time, the excess of middle-aged adults has grown quite sharply over the past decade, and in 2005 it surpassed the number of children by more than 35%.

The ratio between our oldest and youngest generation has changed no less remarkably. A gradual shift upwards can be followed from the late 1960s. It started from the relatively low level at around 17% but by 2005, the ratio has reached 66%. In relative terms, the ratio has increased nearly 4 times since early 1960s. Compared to the case of younger and middle-aged adults, this greater increase reflects a broader range of factors that have contributed. At each point, the ratio of elderly to children reflects the change in fertility not in one but in several successive generations. On the other hand, the shifts in mortality play a much greater role in relation to grandparents as there has been far more change in the proportion of survivors to age 75-79, compared to survivors in younger ages. Both these factors — the decrease in fertility and increase in longevity — have operated in tandem in bringing about the shift in generational structure.

The dynamics of these indicators also reveal effects of major historical events. For instance, the departure from linear growth in the 1990s evidently represents an echo of reduced fertility in the period of WWI more than 75 years earlier. Overall, the shifts in ratios of three ascending generations and children reveal a strong shift from bottom-heavy to top-heavy generational structure in a matter of just a few decades. Currently, not only the population in the position of "parents" but also the "grandparents" outnumber children in the population. And the number of "great-grandparents" is only by one third less than that of young children.

Figure 2.1. *Three ascending generations and the children, Europe 1950-2010*



Source: UN Population Database, 2009

From another angle, the increase in the relative weight of the population in higher positions can be seen as an evidence of the verticalization of the generational structure. An interesting manifestation of this verticalization process is revealed by the comparison of the situation at the beginning and the end of the observation period. Today the ratio between "great-grandparents" and children has reached the same level as was the ratio between "grandparents" and children 5-6 decades ago. In a similar way, the difference between "grandparents" and "parents" has almost disappeared. In a way, this suggests that the developments since the mid-20th century have added an entire generation to the vertical dimension of the structure.

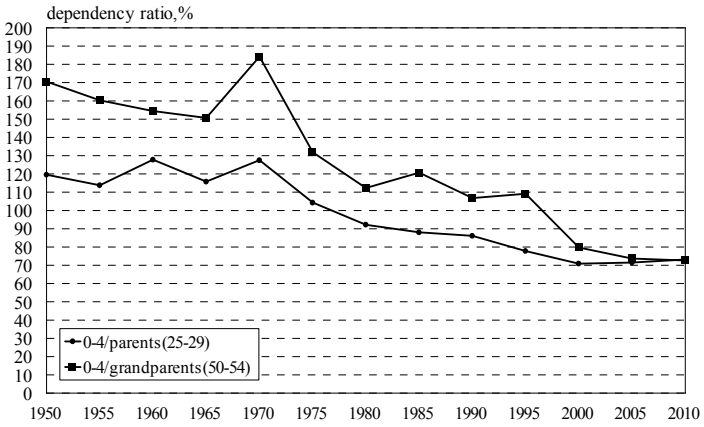
2.2.1 Support-receiving and -providing generations

To outline the influence of demographic trends on major interdependencies between generations, we apply similar measures that were used in the previous sub-section. In the following analysis, we concentrate on how care for children (represented by our youngest age group 0-4) and care for the elderly (represented by our oldest age group 75-79) has been affected by the changing balance of generations in the population over the 50-year time span.

To start with children, the data reveal a significant decline in the demand for care from the generations who can be regarded as primary and secondary care providers. For young adults (parents), the dependency ratio declines from 120-130 to around 70 children

per 100 young adults. Reflecting the dynamics of fertility rates, the bulk of the decline is concentrated in the last three decades of the 20th century (Figure 2.2). The temporal pattern basically mirrors the image presented in Figure 2.1 for these generations. For middle-aged adults (grandparents), who can be regarded as secondary carers, the decline is steeper, from 170 to 70 children per 100 adults. A short-term peak around 1970 reflects the reduction in the size of cohorts in the period of WWI.

Figure 2.2. *Care for children: receiving and providing generations, Europe 1950-2010*

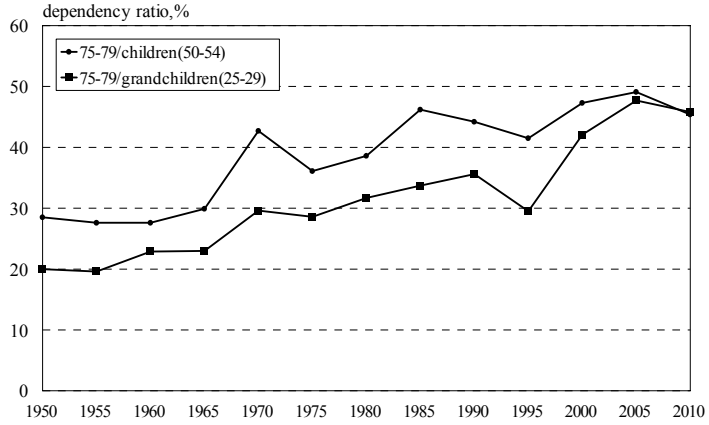


Source: UN Population Database, 2009

With regard to the elderly, the ratios between care-receiving and -providing generations have moved in the opposite directions. Reflecting the combined effect of an improved survival to old age and the decline in fertility, the number of elderly per 100 middle-aged adults (the children of the elderly) has increased by 1.7 times, from less than 30 in the 1950s and 1960s to nearly 50 in the beginning of the 21st century (Figure 2.3).

For young adults (grandchildren of the elderly), who play a secondary role in providing the intergenerational support to the elderly, the dependency ratio has increased at an even higher rate. At the beginning of the 21st century, the two curves basically converge — from the viewpoint of the generational structure this means that the number of young adults no longer significantly exceeds the number of middle-aged groups. In the following analysis we will show how important implications this change is going to have for the future balance of generations receiving and providing care.

Figure 2.3. *Care for the elderly: receiving and providing generations, Europe 1950-2010*

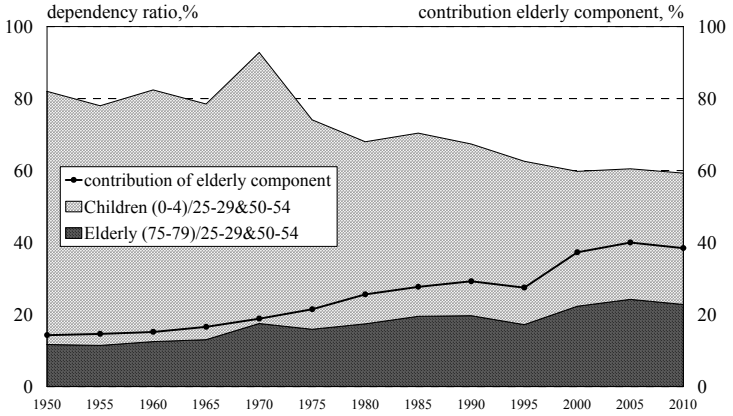


Source: UN Population Database, 2009

The discussed trends in dependency ratios from the perspectives of the children and elderly pose the question about the overall balance between the generations receiving and providing support in the population. To address this question, we combined children and elderly (as receivers), on one hand, and young and middle-aged adults (as providers), on the other (Figure 2.4).

It can be observed that in the past decades the effect of decreasing number of children has been much stronger and brought about a decline in the overall dependency ratio. It fell gradually from 80 to less than 60 children and aged persons per 100 persons in the two middle generations. As mentioned above, the short-term peak around 1970 relates to the echo of WWI. The figure also reveals a noticeable shift in the structure of dependency. The proportion of the elderly component in the structural change has increased nearly three times (from 14% to 38%) against the background of decreasing overall dependency

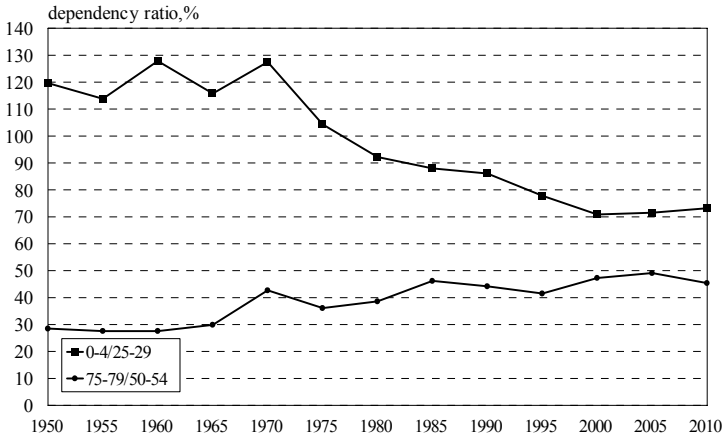
Figure 2.4. *Care for the children and the elderly: receiving and providing generations, Europe 1950-2010*



Source: UN Population Database, 2009

Main support for the children and elderly is provided by different generations. If one assumes that young adults provide the bulk of care for children and middle-aged adults provide most of intergenerational support to the elderly then our data reveals rather diverse outcomes of the demographic trends for the two middle generations. As main providers of support to children, it is the generation of young adults who have benefited from the significant reduction in dependency ratios. Currently, young adults in Europe have 30% fewer dependent children than their counterparts in the beginning of the 1950s. On the other hand, for the middle-aged adults, who are assumed to bear the main responsibility for the support of the elderly, dependency ratios have increased 1.8 times (Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5.*Care for the children and the elderly: perspective of (main) providing generations, Europe 1950-2010*



Source: UN Population Database, 2009

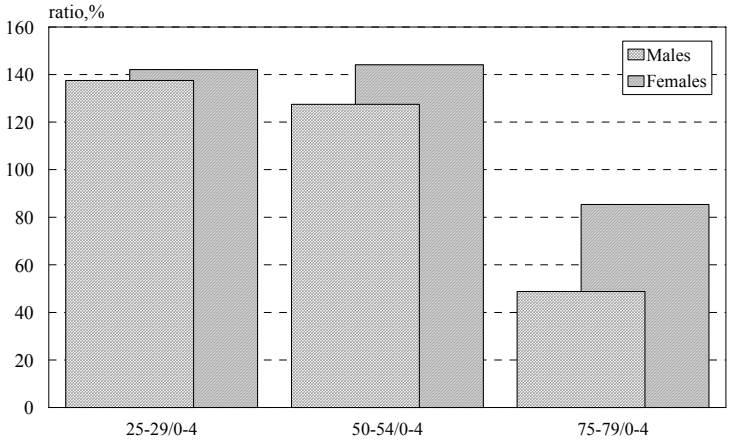
Other things being equal, today the middle-aged generations have to support much larger number of the elderly than it was the case 30 or 40+ years earlier. As a result of the opposite trends described above, the difference between the corresponding dependency ratios has markedly converged.

2.2.2 Gender difference

Differences in longevity and other demographic processes imply that the generational structure of the population is not similar across gender. To address this issue, we used the same set of measures as in the description of general shifts in generational structure, calculated separately for men and women.

With regards to the general pattern, the shift towards top heavy and vertically stretched generational structure is more pronounced in the female population (Figure 2.6). In each position, there are more adult relatives to children in the female population. More importantly, the difference increases noticeably when moving from younger to older generations. In 2005, the gender difference in the ratio of young adults (parents) to children was about 5 %, in the middle generation it was 17%, and among the elderly it accounted for 37%. On average, there were 85 "great-grandmothers" versus 48 "great-fathers" per 100 children in Europe in 2005.

Figure 2.6. *Verticalization of the generational structure, gender perspective Europe 2005*

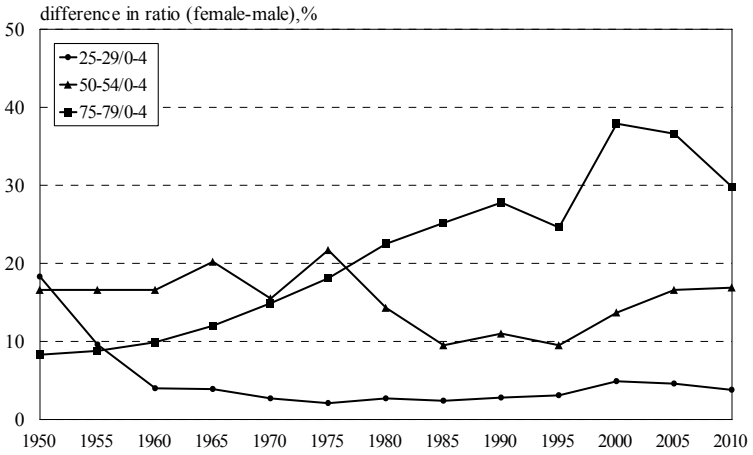


Source: UN Population Database, 2009

The observed pattern stems from the fact that women have better chances of survival to advanced ages. In Europe, this has been coupled by the impact of historical events that took a heavy toll on the generations of men that were drafted into military service during the periods of the two world wars. The influence of historical events is reflected in the noticeable shifts in gender difference observed in the generational structure. From the long-term perspective of demographic developments it becomes evident that compared to the early 1950s, the situation in gender perspective is quite different to what we can observe today.

In the beginning of the observed period, the gender difference was the largest among young adults, reflecting the loss of young men in WWII (Figure 2.7). Contrary to that in the upper part of the generational structure, the difference was actually the smallest.

Figure 2.7. *Gender difference in generational structure, Europe 1950-2010*



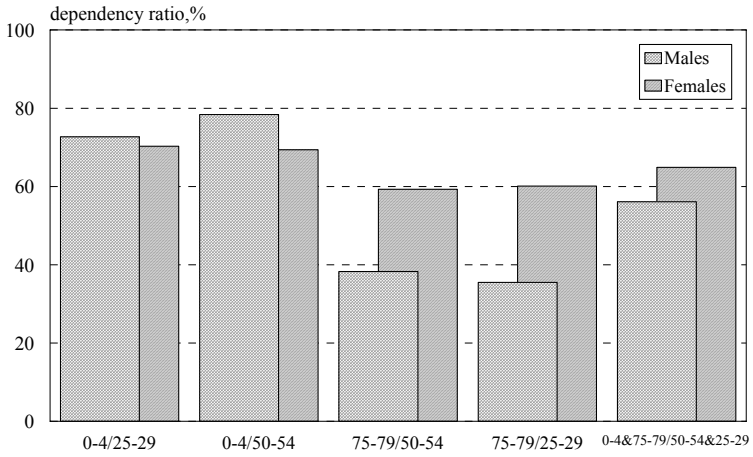
Source: UN Population Database, 2009

After the 1950s, the effect of the war rapidly decreases and ceases to be visible in the younger generation. In the middle generation, the difference persists on a relatively high level until the mid-1970s followed by a decline that mirrors the change in the younger generation 25 years earlier. Only after that point the "normal" pattern emerges with gender difference increasing towards the top of the generational tree. The so-called normality of increased gender difference at the top of the generational tree stems to a great extent from the long-term increasing gender gap in longevity. Recent years are demonstrating convergence between genders in their life expectancy. This is also showing its first signs in the slight decrease of the current gender difference in particular at the top of the generational tree.

The gender differences in the advancement towards top heavy generational structure have implications on intergenerational interdependencies. The balance between generations receiving and providing support varies between men and women, but in addition, the gradient of gender difference depends on whether the support is provided down or up the generational tree. With regards to children, men feature a somewhat higher dependency ratio because there are fewer men in the father and grandfather generation, compared to women in respective generations (Figure 2.8). Concerning the elderly, the dependency ratios appear higher among women — there are about 1.5 times

more elderly women per middle-aged generation than there are men. As the latter difference is more pronounced, the overall balance between generations receiving and providing support is somewhat less favourable for the female population. From the viewpoint of providing generations, this affects particularly the middle-aged groups: the more extensive the gender gap in the survival of men and women, the bigger the difference.

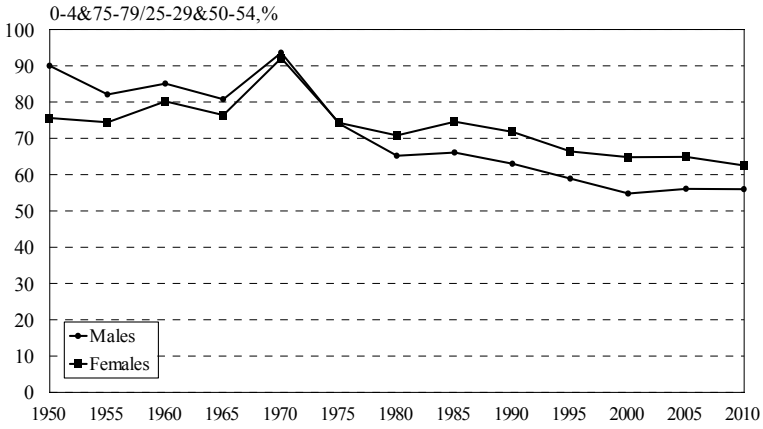
Figure 2.8. *Care for children and for elderly: receiving and providing generations, Europe 2005*



Source: UN Population Database, 2009

The long-term perspective reveals, however, that the higher overall dependency among women has not been a permanent feature of the generational structure (Figure 2.9). For the whole of Europe it has emerged in the late 1970s, in earlier decades the situation was the opposite. The earlier pattern relates to the effect of WWII that inflicted heavy losses on men in generations that we regard as providers in our analysis. As time passed, the cohort flow gradually removed this effect from the young and middle-aged generations. Despite the fact that such a measure reveals the overall dependency ratio of correspondingly male providers to male receivers or female providers to female receivers (which in every-day life circumstances rarely is in such correspondence) the coincidence of such a turnover in the care burden for females with the manifested emancipation at the same period might deserve closer investigation in the future.

Figure 2.9. *Care for children and the elderly: receiving and providing generations, Europe 1950-2010*



Source: UN Population Database, 2009

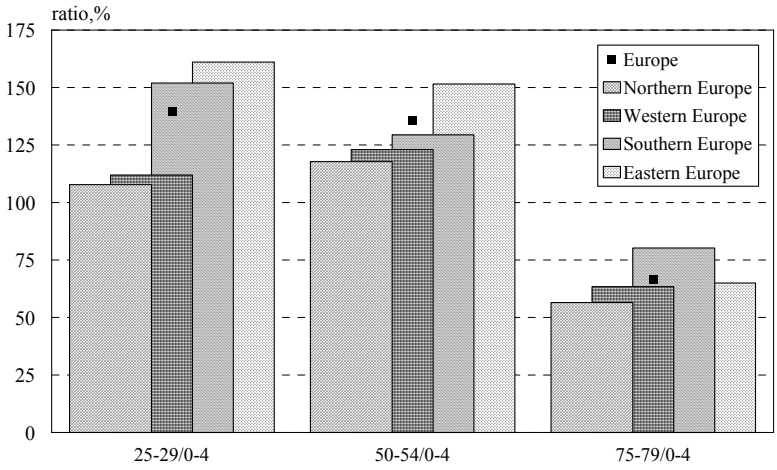
2.2.3 Regional diversity of Europe in generational structure

Demographic patterns are diverse in Europe, therefore it is necessary to examine how the levels and trends in mortality, fertility and other processes combine and translate into variation in intergenerational constellations. To address the issue, we calculated our measures for all individual countries and major regions of Europe. To start with a general pattern, the largest contrasts currently relate to the ratio between young adults and children. Reflecting the recent trends in fertility, there is a clear distinction between Northern and Western Europe, on one hand, and Southern and Eastern Europe on the other. In Northern and Western Europe, the number of young adults only slightly exceeds that of the children whereas in Southern and Eastern Europe young adults outnumber children by more than 50% (Figure 2.10).

In the ratios of middle-aged groups (grandparents) to children and the elderly (great-grandparents) to children, similarly to parent generation, Northern and Western Europe feature lowest ratios. This means that the overall generational structure is less heavy in the top for these two regions than in other parts of the continent. Comparing Southern and Eastern Europe, the sequence of these regions changes when moving from young and middle-aged adults to the great-grandparents generation. This reflects noticeably higher levels of mortality in Eastern Europe, which result in a smaller

proportion of the cohorts that survive until advanced ages, as well as much earlier decline and more prolonged time with low levels of fertility in Southern Europe.

Figure 2.10. *Generational structure of the population, Major regions of Europe 2005*



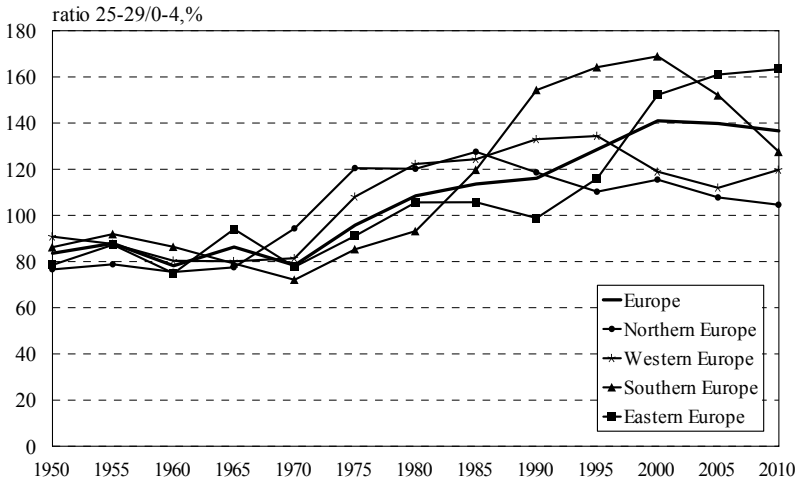
Source: UN Population Database, 2009

It is important to note that the regional patterns have considerably changed over time. This is illustrated by the ratio of young adults to children, which closely mirrors the dynamics of fertility rates across regions (Figure 2.11). In the 1950s and early 1960s (the period of the baby boom in many countries), the differences between regions were fairly small in Europe. Differences started to increase in the late 1960s and 1970s, when fertility declined below replacement first in Northern and Western Europe, pushing the ratio of young adults to children upwards, above the 100% line.

A steeper decline of fertility in Southern Europe towards the end of the 1980s brought the ratio to even higher levels, followed by similar developments in Eastern Europe in the 1990s, which give rise to the current pattern of regional differences. Similar alterations are also revealed in the patterns involving the middle-aged and the elderly. All regions of Europe, except Northern Europe, experienced a noticeable decrease in the ratio of grandparents to children in the 1970s when the parental cohorts of WWII reached the age of grandparents. For two decades starting from the 1980s, the ratios shot to high levels for Southern Europe, which was experiencing a considerable decrease in fertility levels. After 1995, supported by the sharp decline in fertility in Eastern Europe, the ratios

of grandparents to children have shown increasing trends, reaching the highest levels by 2005.

Figure 2.11. *Dynamics of regional differences: young adults (parents) and children, Major regions of Europe 1950-2010*



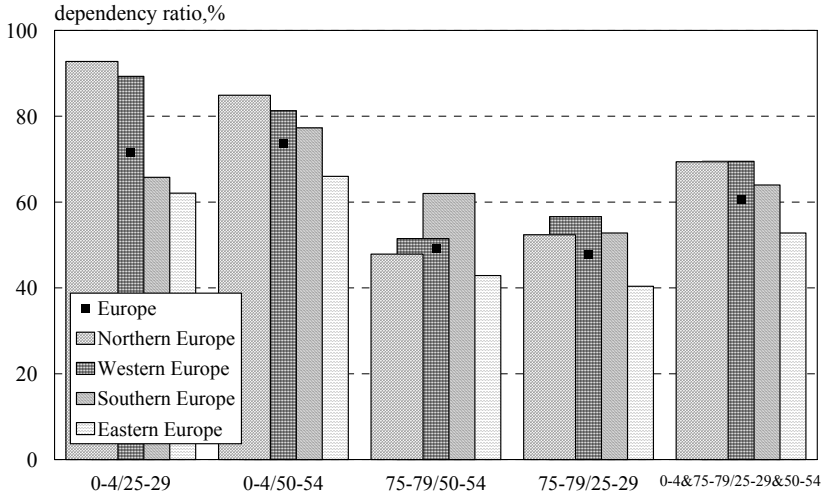
Source: UN Population Database, 2009

Due to the above-mentioned demographic developments, the ratios of great-grandparents to children were the highest in Northern and Western Europe from the 1970s up to the second half of the 1980s. From then on, the ratios in Southern Europe started increasing, becoming the highest in Europe. Since 1995, the same ratios started to rise sharply in Eastern Europe, but didn't quite reach the levels of Southern Europe by 2005. It has to be noted that in the ratios of the elderly to children we can notice a similar brief downward surge in all regions around 1995, reflecting the impact of WWI losses and smaller birth cohorts.

Regional differences are also manifested in the balance between generations receiving and providing support (Figure 2.12). Consistent with higher fertility over nearly two recent decades, Northern and Western Europe feature higher child dependency compared to Southern and Eastern Europe. This difference is particularly noticeable in the ratio of children to young adults. The highest ratio between the elderly and the middle-aged population is characteristic to Southern Europe. Owing to poorer chances of survival until old age, the lowest dependency for the elderly is characteristic for Eastern

Europe. As children outweigh the elderly in terms of dependency ratios, the overall ratio between receiving and providing generations appears higher in Northern and Western Europe. Judging upon the overall dependency ratios, the generational structure is currently most favorable in Eastern Europe where both children and elderly are comparatively less numerous than middle generations.

Figure 2.12. *Care for children and elderly: receiving and providing generations, Major regions of Europe 2005*



Source: UN Population Database, 2009

2.2.3.1 Intraregional variation

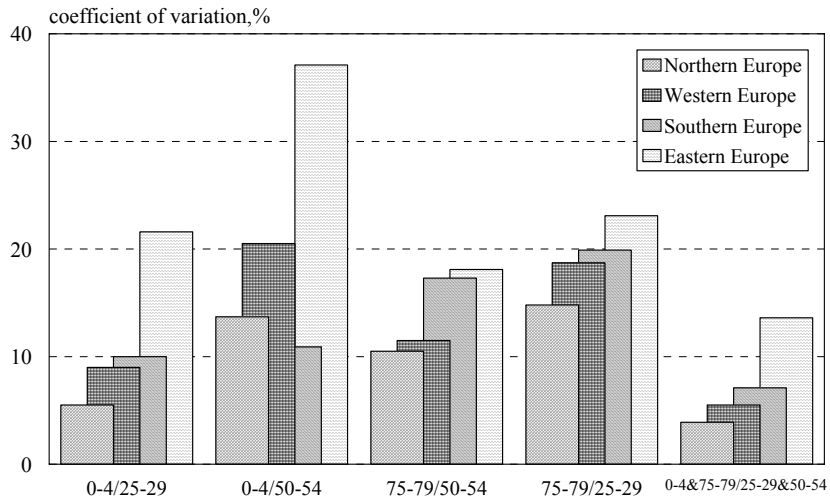
Despite the common understanding of the main differences between the four major regions of Europe mentioned in the discussion above, these regions are not very homogeneous within themselves. In order to highlight the variations, we present intraregional differences by coefficients of variations within the indicators of generational structure discussed above.

In the ratios of children to young adults, the variation is the smallest among the countries of North European region and the highest among the countries in the Eastern Europe (Figure 2.13). The huge variation in this ratio between the countries reaches more than 20% and is mostly affected by different patterns of fertility in 2005. The variation becomes even larger in regard to the ratio of children to their grandparents, where the coefficient for Eastern Europe exceeds 30%, followed by Western Europe with the

variation more than 20%. The main reason behind such a substantial variation within the regions is that the regions differ to a great extent by their recent fertility patterns and levels. Thus, in 2005 in Eastern Europe one can find South-Eastern Europe and Caucasian region with fertility levels closer to Northern Europe as well as Central Europe and CIS- region with the lowest levels closer to Southern Europe and German-speaking regions. The latter region is causing the extensive variations of the indicators in Western Europe.

In the ratios regarding the elderly, the variance is not so diverse among the European regions due to relatively high mortality rates among East European population. In the overall balance between generations receiving and providing support, the variance in the care for children becomes more dominant and thus the overall difference between the regions in their care-giving responsibilities remains the highest for countries of Eastern Europe. For that reason, it is good to take notice that no generalizations can be made on the basis of one particular country of the region, for that country might represent a totally different pattern of demographic development than the average for the region assumes.

Figure 2.13. *Intra-regional variation in dependency ratios, Major regions of Europe 2005*



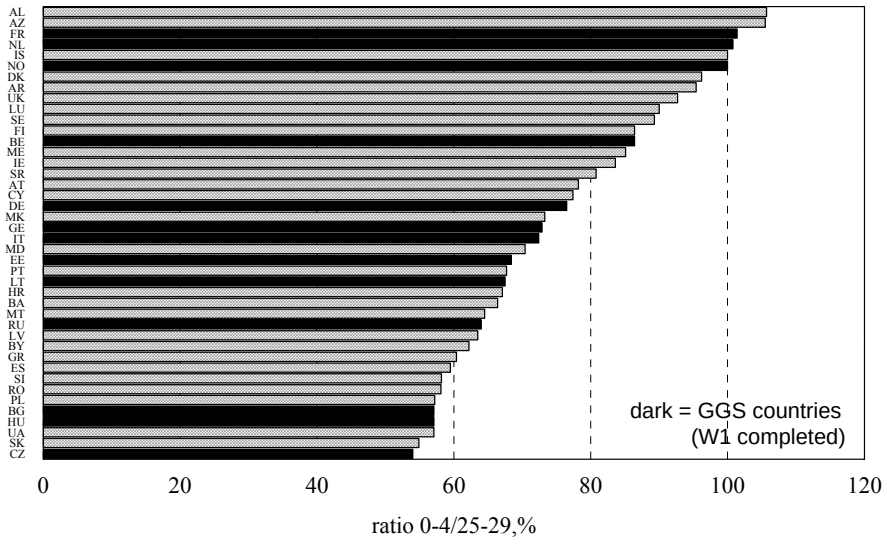
Source: UN Population Database, 2009

2.2.3.2 Country-specific differences in generational structures

In the following, the main intergenerational dependency ratios for 45 individual countries are presented. As our main focus in this collaborative effort is to uncover the generational interdependencies mainly based on the individual data represented by countries participating in the GGS, it is necessary to give a broader context to the main trends of these countries against the background of other European countries.

In respect to child dependency, the countries of the GGS (those who had carried out the first wave the survey before the start of this project) are spread quite evenly across the spectrum: there are GGS countries represented at the top, in the middle and at the bottom of the distribution. The contrast between the countries at the top and bottom is really strong -- in the Netherlands, France and Norway the child dependency is almost twice as high as in Bulgaria, Hungary and the Czech Republic (Figure 2.14). In 2005 this difference mainly describes the downturn of fertility levels in the latter countries during the last decade.

Figure 2.14. *Care for children: receiving and providing generations, Countries of Europe 2005*

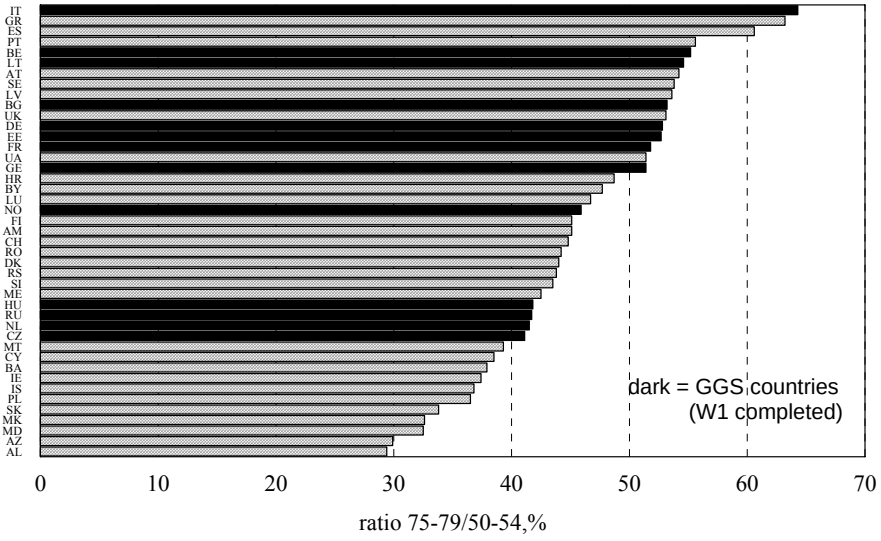


Source: UN Population Database, 2009

In terms of the ratio between the elderly and the middle-aged adults, the distribution of GGS countries is somewhat less even (Figure 2.15). In particular, the countries with the lowest dependency ratios for the elderly are not represented in the survey. These countries are mainly from Central and South-Eastern Europe, but there are also Cyprus, Ireland and Iceland, all known by long-term higher fertility rates, in this group. In the ratios for the care for the elderly, the impact of diverse demographic trends becomes more evident. Thus, one can find Lithuania and Belgium abreast at the top of the distribution and, for instance, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic at the lower end. Higher fertility levels of Lithuania and the Netherlands compared to Belgium and the Czech Republic 50 to 80 years ago on the one hand, and long-term mortality stagnation at high levels in Lithuania and the Czech Republic on the other, have brought these countries close to each other by 2005 with regards to the burden on middle-aged population for the care of the elderly generation.

In the overall balance of generations receiving and giving support, the difference between countries somewhat diminishes compared to indicators, presented above. Because of the dominant child dependency, GGS countries are again more evenly spread across the spectrum. However, the difference between France at the top and Hungary and the Czech Republic at the bottom is more than 1.5 times.

Figure 2.15. *Care for elderly: receiving and providing generations, Countries of Europe 2005*



Source: UN Population Database, 2009

2.3 Future of the shifts in the generational structure

As mentioned in the sub-section 2.2 on data and analytical methods, in order to cast light on the impact of the demographic developments of the past and present on the future constellations in the generational structure, we have used two main scenarios of the UN world population prospects of the 2008 revision. In our analysis it became evident that even though both fertility and mortality patterns have shaped the current structure between generations and the potential for support-givers, the most important underlying determinant for most of these changes has been the huge variation in fertility developments. In this respect, the two scenarios chosen for the analysis outline the impact of fertility trends on the same indicators used throughout the chapter for measuring changes in the intergenerational structure, assuming that mortality and migration patterns are developing in the normal (most probable) way.

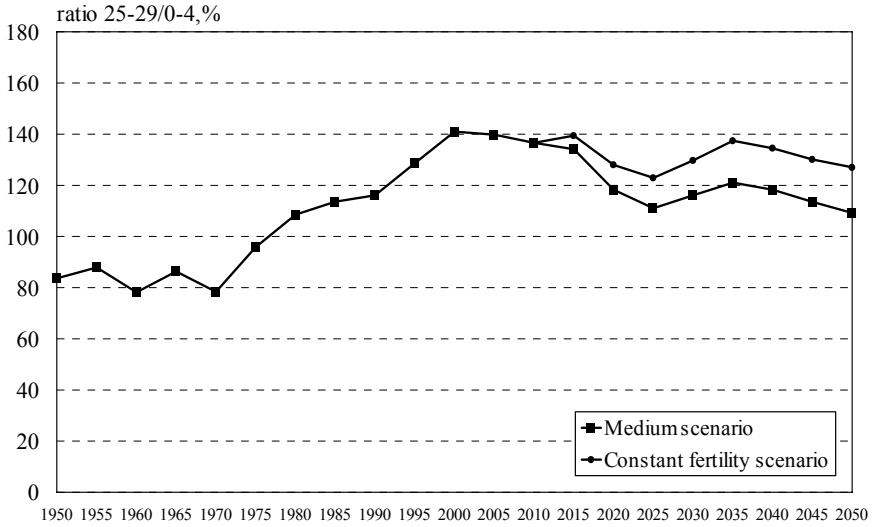
The UN medium scenario derives from the assumption that fertility development will converge at the total fertility level of 1.85 by the end of the projected period; the UN scenario on constant fertility assumes that fertility patterns will stay at their current levels to the end of the period. Thus, the comparison of the two variants highlights the sensitivity to changes in fertility levels. In the following, we first outline the changes of the generational structure for Europe as a whole, and then regard the projected changes of the regional differences. In order to place the future developments in the context of longer trends, in the figures the data series since 1950 is included.

2.3.1 Projected general patterns

In the development of the ratio of young adults to children, the currently high ratio describes the maximum peak during the whole course of a hundred years. According to projections, no further increase is foreseen, but some decline is expected as smaller birth cohorts reach the prime childbearing age (Figure 2.16). Under the medium scenario, the ratio is expected to return to the level observed in the mid-1980s (113%). Under the constant fertility scenario, it returns to the level of the late 1990s (130%). In the context

of the long-term trend, by the end of the 2050s the ratio of parents' generation to children will have increased by 30% in a hundred years and outnumbered the generation of children since 1980s.

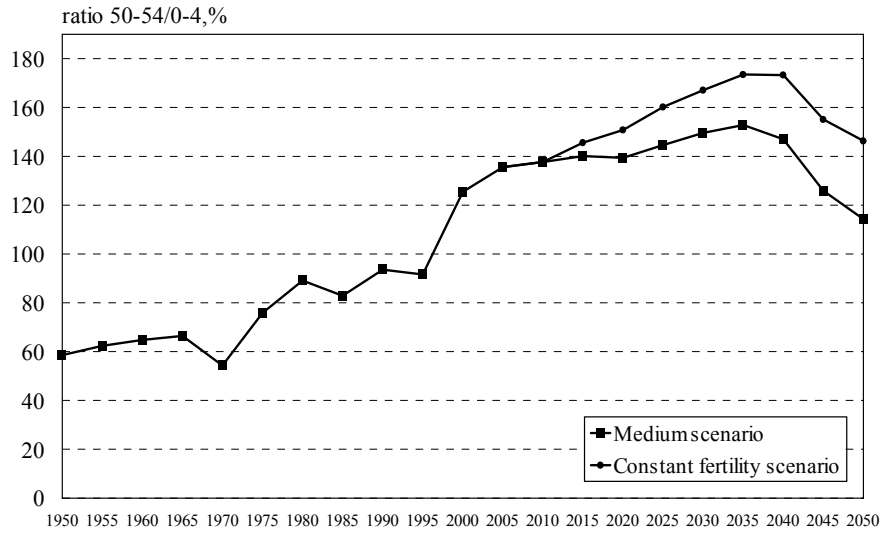
Figure 2.16. *Young adults (parents) and children, Europe 1950-2050*



Source: UN Population Database, 2009

The ratio of middle-aged adults (grandparents) to children, after the noticeable increase since the mid 1990s, will remain at the currently high level for two decades. In the late 2020s this ratio is projected to continue to increase until 2035-2040 and reach higher levels than at present (Figure 2.17). Under both scenarios, however, this is followed by a reversal of the trend: smaller cohorts will dominate the middle-aged population. As a result, under medium scenario, the ratio of middle-aged adults to children is projected to return to the level of 2000. In case of the constant fertility scenario, the decline brings the indicator to the level of 2015 by the end of the projected period. From the hundred years' perspective, there will be a double increase of grandparents to children by the end of the projected period compared to the starting point.

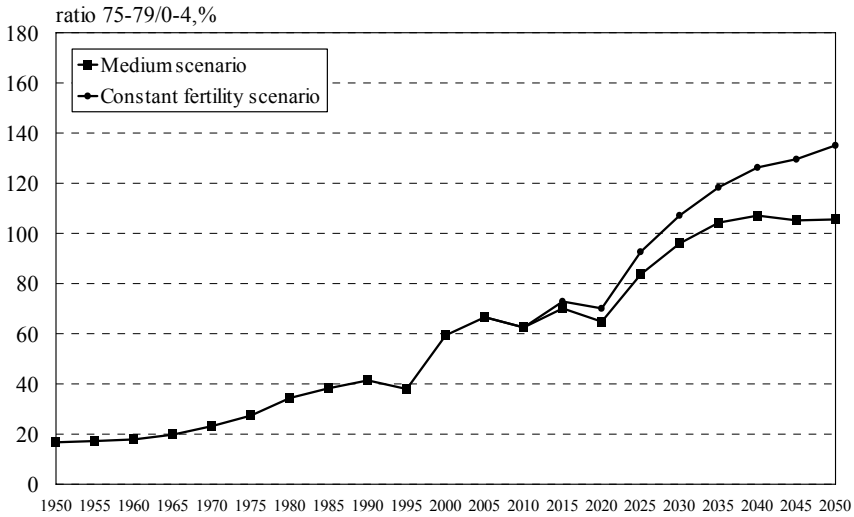
Figure 2.17. *Middle-aged population (grandparents) and children, Europe 1950-2050*



Source: UN Population Database, 2009

Regarding the perspective for the elderly, the growth in their ratio to children is expected to continue noticeably. Under both scenarios, a particularly steep increase is projected to start at around 2020 (Figure 2.18). Under the medium scenario, the stabilization of the indicator on the level of the elderly outnumbering children is expected after the year 2035. Under the constant fertility scenario, the increase in the ratio is steeper compared to the ratio foreseen by the medium scenario despite the fact that the growth will slow down in the last years of the projected period. According to this scenario the elderly have outnumbered children by 35% by 2050. The change in the structure concerning this indicator is going to be the greatest over the hundred years: compared to the initial levels in the 1950s, the ratio of great-grandparents to children will increase more than six times over the period.

Figure 2.18. *Elderly (grandparents) and children, Europe 1950-2050*



Source: UN Population Database, 2009

To summarize the described trends, the shift towards top heavy structure will continue at the upper levels of generational structure — over the next years there will be clearly more middle-aged adults and elderly per younger generations than today. Also, according to both scenarios the elderly (great-grandparents) will outnumber young children in Europe.

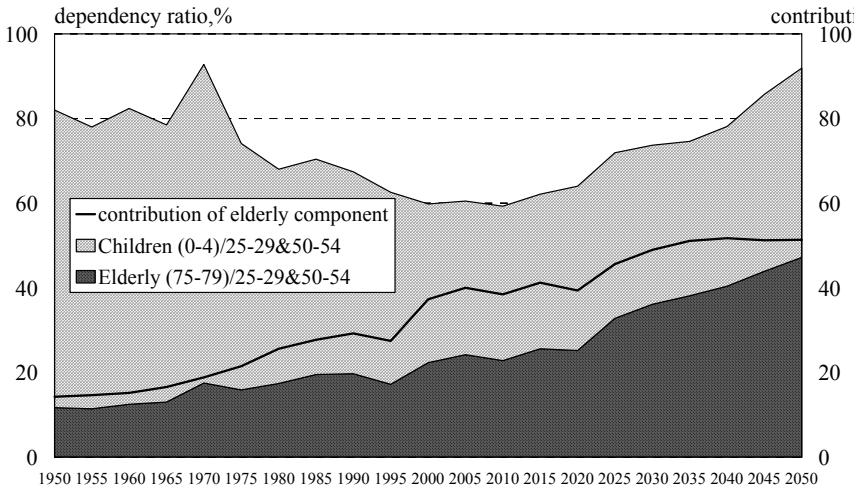
In terms of generational interdependencies, a further shift towards top heavy generational structure implies a significant change in the balance between receiving and providing generations for older generations— the ratio of the elderly to the middle-aged generation nearly doubles, whatever the scenario. Currently there are less than 50 elderly people per 100 middle-aged people, but the number will grow to around 90 per 100 by 2050. This also pushes upwards the overall balance between receiving and providing generations.

With regards to child dependency, the change is smaller over time and more dependent on the projection scenario. In case of the constant fertility scenario, the child dependency is going to decrease even compared to the current level by the end of the projected period. This scenario also implies a much bigger growth in relation to the elderly dependency compared to the medium scenario. In the overall balance between

generations receiving and giving support, it is projected to increase to a much greater extent due to the increase of the elderly component in the balance.

To further understand how the dynamics of the overall balance between receiving and providing generations is going to change, we concentrate on the developments over time on the example of the medium scenario. Observing the trend over the hundred years, it becomes evident that Europe is currently experiencing the lowest overall dependency ratios on the generations of providing care within the observed and projected timeframe (Figure 2.19).

Figure 2.19. *Care for children and the elderly: Receiving and providing generations, Europe 1950-2050 (UN medium scenario)*

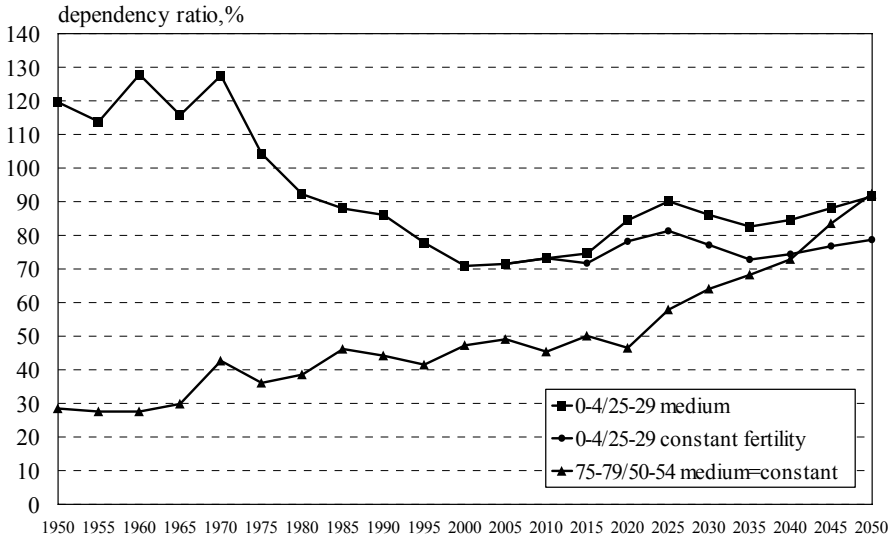


Source: UN Population Database, 2009

The lowest overall ratio between receiving and providing generations started in 1995 and is projected to last until 2020 for the whole of Europe. From that point on, the decrease in the child dependency is likely to come to an end and no more offset the increase in the dependency ratios because of the elderly. By the late 2040s, the overall dependency burden for generations providing care is projected to exceed the level at the beginning of the observed period. At the same time, demographic trends transform the structure of the generational interdependencies to a great extent— starting from the late 2030s, the elderly are going to contribute more than 50% to the overall dependency ratio, compared to 14% in 1950.

From the viewpoint of providers, the rise in the intergenerational dependency is distributed unevenly between our two middle generations (Figure 2.20). On one hand, there is relatively little change in dependency ratios for the generation of young adults, but on the other hand, there is quite a large increase for middle-aged population who are usually assumed to take the main responsibility for the support of the elderly. As a result, by 2050, there will be at least as many elderly people per middle-aged generation than there are children per young adults. In case of the constant fertility scenario, the dependency on middle-aged population will for the first time over the hundred years be exceeding that of the young adults' starting from the 2040s.

Figure 2.20. *Care for children and elderly: perspective of (main) providing generations, Europe 1950-2050*



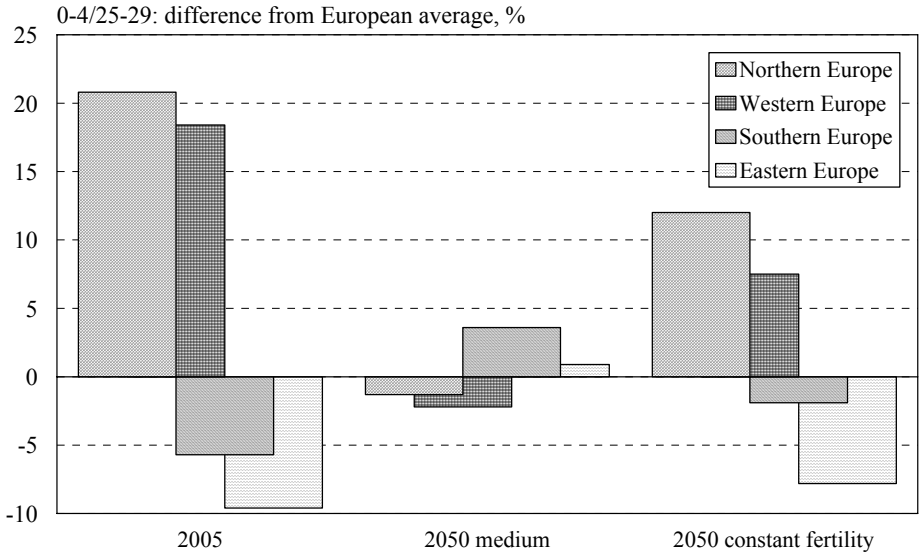
Source: UN Population Database, 2009

2.3.2 Projected regional patterns of generational shifts

According to projections, there will also be changes in the regional pattern on generational interdependencies. Regarding children, the differences between regions are projected to grow smaller over the projected period (Figure 2.21). This will occur under the medium scenario, which assumes convergence of fertility levels. However, the range of differences in child dependency will also grow smaller under the constant fertility scenario compared to current ratios. The latter scenario projects the current divergence

between North and East European regions into the future, whereas according to the medium scenario the differentiation by care for children becomes the biggest between Western and Southern Europe.

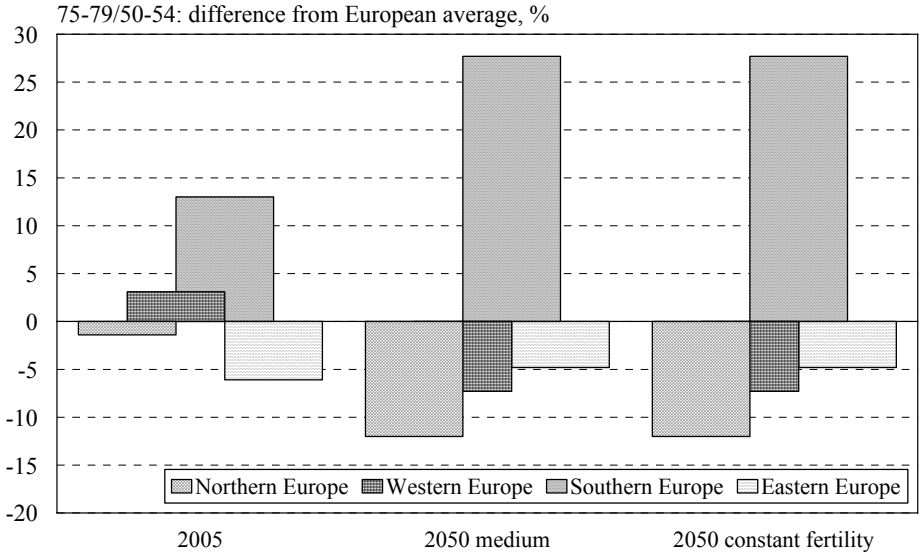
Figure 2.21. *Care for children: receiving and providing generations, Major regions of Europe 2005 and 2050*



Source: UN Population Database, 2009

For the elderly, the opposite compared to child dependency ratios appears to be the case - the range of differences between major regions of Europe will increase. Over the next four decades, the divide between Southern Europe and other regions will increase regardless of the projection scenarios (Figure 2.22). The developments related to the elderly are also to a much greater extent going to shape the shift towards the increase of regional differences in overall dependency ratios.

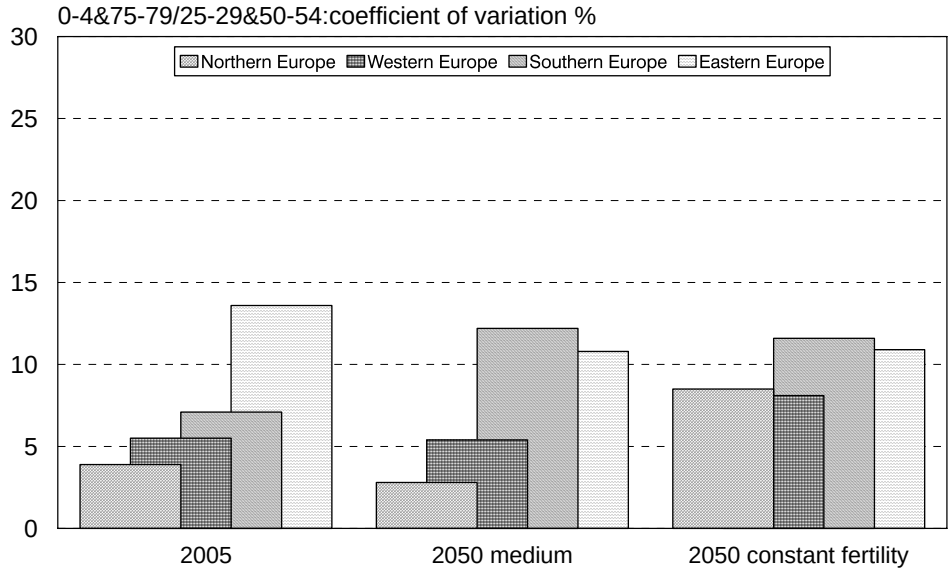
Figure 2.22. *Care for the elderly: receiving and providing generations, Major regions of Europe 2005 and 2050*



Source: UN Population Database, 2009

The overall dependency ratio with currently the highest intra-regional variation in Eastern Europe will somewhat decrease by the end of the projected period in either case of the UN scenarios (Figure 2.23). The highest increase of intraregional variation is expected to occur between the countries of Southern Europe no matter which scenario we consider. In case of the constant fertility scenario in all regions of Europe, except in Eastern Europe with its relatively high level of variation, the country differences of the overall dependency ratio are going to increase.

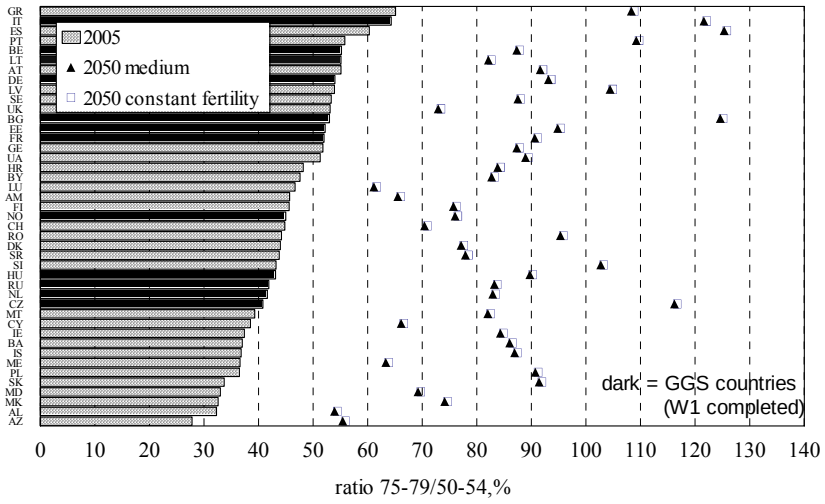
Figure 2.23. *Intra-regional variation in overall dependency ratio, Major regions of Europe 2005 and 2050*



Source: UN Population Database, 2009

With regards to the specific countries, they are described by increasing diversity in relation to the elderly component in the dependency ratio at the end of the projected period. For some countries, the ratio of the elderly parents to their middle-aged children will almost double and surpass the number of the middle-aged generation. Quite a large amount of countries will fall to the range were the generation of elderly parents is only 10-20% smaller than the generation of their middle-aged children (Figure 2.24).

Figure 2.24. *Care for the elderly: providing and receiving generations, Countries of Europe 2005 and 2050*



Source: UN Population Database, 2009

Only in a few countries in South-Eastern Europe, CIS4 and Caucasus, the ratio of the elderly barely reaches 60%. It has to be kept in mind that among the countries represented in our analysis at the micro level, from those currently characterised by the highest levels of the elderly dependencies, only Italy remains at the top, whereas Lithuania in the following 40 years' time will be represented by the lowest values of the ratio among the GGS countries. In contrast, among those with currently lower levels of elderly dependency ratio, the Netherlands and Russia remain at the bottom, whereas the Czech Republic, currently abreast with the latter, will move closer to the countries at the top. Thus, the long-term demographic developments are going to determine quite divergent patterns and expectations in the overall care dependency across countries in the coming years.

3 FAMILY CONSTELLATIONS IN THE GGS COUNTRIES: Evidence from the micro-level

Puur, Allan; Sakkeus, Luule

The third section of this report extends the analysis of family constellations by making use of newly available comparative surveys implemented around the mid-2000s in a number of European countries in the framework of Generations and Gender Survey (GGS). Having among its objectives an aim to explore family ties and intergenerational relations, the GGP possesses several advantages over the conventional sources of demographic information.

The measures derived from vital statistics are indispensable for the portrayal of trends in mortality, fertility and nuptiality, however, they tend to be process-oriented and individual-based, which limits their value in providing a combined insight into how the developments in various processes come together, clustering in families and shaping people's lives. Even with the excellent data available for some countries with advanced demographic statistics, the results of the analyses based on vital statistics pertain to a particular segment of family ties, missing the comprehensive account of intergenerational constellations (e.g. Murhpy, Martikainen and Pennec 2006).

Another major limitation of conventional demographic data sources relates to the unit of data collection. Much of the existing knowledge on family relations has been inferred from censuses and surveys which collect data on households, i.e. groups of persons (or one person) who make a common provision for food, shelter and other essentials for living. Though this information offers valuable insights into household composition, the approach has serious limitations for the analysis of family constellations. The measures limited to a household unit disregard non-co-residing kin and connections beyond the household that could noticeably affect the well-being of individuals. For instance, the implications of solitary living in the old age, in case children can be called on for help, may be very different from the situation where such a

possibility does not exist. In particular, the need for "looking beyond the household", as put by Grundy, Murphy and Shelton (1999), has emphasized the two major shifts that shape the household and family structure of modern populations — the increasing residential autonomy of the elderly and decreasing generational co-residence (Heaton and Hoppe 1987; Ruggles 1994; Schoeni 1998; UN 2005), and the asserted growth in the importance of multigenerational bonds (Bengtson 2001; Dykstra and Komter 2006).

Family demographers have devised different strategies that can be applied for exploring and analysing kin networks beyond the household. One frequently used strategy relies on models which use the parameters of underlying demographic processes (mortality, fertility, union formation and dissolution) as input and provide the estimates of kin networks under a specified demographic regime. Existing models strongly vary in their complexity and mathematical methods, with a basic distinction made between macro- and micro simulation (for overviews, Bongaarts, Burch and Wachter 1987; Smith and Oeppen 1993; van Imhoff and Post 1998). Although simulation methods have important advantages, particularly for situations where direct data are not available (historical populations) or not applicable (projections), their limitations should not be neglected. Most importantly, in building models, researchers are forced to introduce simplifying assumptions — some of which specify input parameters and some are embedded in the model — about the underlying processes.

The assumptions underlying simulation models have significant influence on the results and can always be debated (Watkins, Menken and Bongaarts 1987; Ruggles 1994). This may be a relatively minor concern in the comparisons of highly contrasting demographic regimes when changes over time are so strong that the results are not particularly sensitive to variations, within reasonable ranges, in the values of chosen model parameters. However, when the focus is on more subtle differences, including contemporary cross-national differences in Europe, the robustness of results is subject to a noticeable decline. Another limitation of the modeling approach relates to its preoccupation with central tendency and the neglect of variability between population groups, defined by social or cultural characteristics. For these reasons, model kin counts should be regarded as a hypothetical reconstruction of reality rather than an actual photograph which is provided by direct observational data.

Observational data about family constellations can be derived from surveys, as detailed questions about ascendant and descendant kin seem to be too "heavy" for inclusion in census programmes.[7] Until recently, such surveys have been relatively few in number, and as noted by Post *et al* (1997), they often were inclined to have relatively small samples, and thus might not be considered representative of the population as a whole. From the viewpoint of comparative research, a major limitation relates to the fact that the evidence from nationally representative large-scale surveys pertains to a fairly limited number of countries, in Europe mainly from the western part of the continent (e.g. France, the Netherlands, the UK). Concerning Eastern Europe, the preliminary survey of literature yielded a reference to relevant studies only for Hungary (Knipscheer *et al* 2000).

Against that background, the newly available data from the GGS makes an important contribution to comparative studies of family constellations. The survey allows a direct observation of vertical and horizontal ties which link, irrespective of co-residence, successive family generations and various types of exchange that are channeled along these ties. These questions cannot or can only partially be answered with other existing large-scale cross-nationally comparative datasets. For instance, SHARE (Survey of Health and Retirement in Europe) collects information from the older (50+) age groups only; ECHP (EC Household Panel) and its current successor EU-SILC (EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions), have only limited information on family members living outside the household.

In what follows, we present findings from the analysis based on the GGS data from seven countries. Before turning to the results, however, the following sub-section briefly introduces the dataset and analytical approach.

[7] In the countries with comprehensive population registers, information on intergenerational family ties and kin availability can be also obtained by means of record linkage from registers (Hagestad 2000). For historical populations, genealogical data, deducted from parish or civil registers, have been applied for the same purpose (Plakans 1984; Post *et al* 1997).

3.1 Data and analytical approach

3.1.1 Generations and Gender Survey

The Generations and Gender Survey (GGS) is the main pillar of the comparative research program designed to improve understanding of demographic and social development and of the factors that influence these developments, with central attention towards relationships between children and parents (*generations*) and partners (*gender*). The GGS is steered by the Consortium, composed of the Population Activities Unit of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, and the Europe's leading demographic institutes.

Methodologically, the survey applies the life course approach, focusing on the processes of childbearing, partnership formation and dissolution, home-leaving and retiring (Vikat et al 2007). The selection of topics for data collection mainly proceeds from the theoretically grounded relevance to one or more of the mentioned processes. A large proportion of the survey deals with economic aspects of life, such as employment, income and wealth. Another comparably large section is devoted to values and attitudes. Other major analytic domains covered by the survey include household composition and organization, fecundity and contraception, education, housing and residential mobility, social networks and private transfers, health and public transfers. In addition to the core that each participating country is expected to implement in full, the survey program included four optional modules on nationality and ethnicity, on previous partners, on intentions of breaking up and on housing, respectively.

Compared to its predecessor, the Fertility and Family Surveys (FFS) program (1988-2000), the GGS integrates a retrospective view, derived from event histories, with a prospective approach. This implies a panel design, i.e. the respondents are followed across three successive waves, of which the data collection in the middle of the first decade of the 21st century represents the first wave, with 3-year intervals between the waves. From the substantive point of view, taking the prospective view allows analysts to broaden the scope of explanatory variables by including subjective phenomena, economic characteristics, living arrangements and social networks that are difficult or impossible to

measure reliably for the past. Following the respondents up to the next panel wave allows to use this versatile information in explanations of family and demographic behavior. From another angle, the panel design also allows to investigate the consequences of the latter on various other domains, objective as well as subjective. The survey instrument for the first wave was finalized in 2003 (UNECE 2005).

The GGS aimed to nationally represent probability samples of men and women between ages 18-79 years, living in non-institutional households. Compared to the FFS, a major change in sampling strategy relates to the extension of target population beyond the reproductive age span. This enables the survey to provide information about processes related to ageing and later phases of the life course (changes in marital and family status, living arrangements, health and disability, employment, retirement, well-being, social support networks, intergenerational exchange etc). To avoid a gender bias characteristic of the preceding program that placed greater emphasis on the data on women, the GGS sampling plan foresees approximately equal number of men and women to be interviewed. From the technical point of view, stratified self weighting samples were recommended (Simard and Franklin 2005). The consideration of sample size is driven by the requirement to have a certain minimum number of events between panel waves. The requirement translates into at least 3,000 women and 3,000 men of reproductive ages (18-44) in the first wave, and if possible, at least 2,000 women and 2,000 men in post-reproductive ages (45-79). Data were collected by means of face-to-face interviews with one person in a household in each wave.

After launching the development of the GGS program in July 2000, a total of 13 European countries (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Russia) have completed the data collection for the first wave of their national surveys. Another 4 countries (Belgium, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia) had implemented pilot surveys and some countries were reportedly yet in an earlier phase of survey preparation. Among

countries with the first wave completed, Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, and Russia had already completed the second wave[8].

The present analysis covers seven countries for which the micro data from the first wave of the survey were available for the authors in the early 2009.[9] The countries include Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, and Russia. Although the selection does not include any Nordic and south-European countries, it appears quite representative of the diversity in historical as well as contemporaneous demographic patterns in Europe. From the historical point of view, the countries cover the entire spectrum of demographic modernization stretching from the vanguard (France) to the latecomers (e.g. Georgia and the Russian Federation). With respect to current patterns, they feature a considerable variation in mortality, fertility and nuptiality regimes, which sets a favorable ground for exploring the interplay between the underlying demographic processes and family constellations. To this end, it is important to note that the diversity can be observed not only between the two major socio-geographical regions that the countries represent (East and West) but to a noticeable extent within them (Council of Europe 2006; Eurostat 2009). Also, support to the latter observation comes from the analysis of country differences in generational structure of the population, presented in the earlier parts of the report.

Table 1. Basic characteristics of GGS surveys

Country	Survey year	Age range	Sample size (respondents)	Dataset version
Bulgaria	2004	18-79	12858	v.1.5
Estonia	2004-2005	21-80	7855	v.nat
France	2005	18-79	10079	v.1.5
Georgia	2006	18-79	10000	v.2.3
Germany	2005	18-79	10017	v.1.9

[8] This overview is based on the country reports to the previous GGS International Working Group meeting (Geneva, May 2008). Among the non-European countries participating in the program Japan and Australia have implemented the 1st wave. Japan has proceeded to the 2nd wave.

[9] In 2009, during the preparation of this report the harmonised micro data has become available for Netherlands. The analysis of Dutch survey will be added at the later stage of the project.

Hungary	2004-2005	21-78	13540	v.1.5
Russia	2004	18-79	11261	v.1.5

Source: GGS database

Table 1 briefly reports the basic characteristics of each national survey included in the analysis.[10] Despite some variation, the table reveals a fairly good comparability across countries with regards to the period of data collection, age range of the respondents and overall sample size. For the countries that have provided weights in the dataset, the weighted data are used in the analyses. The details pertaining to specific variables and data quality are discussed in the sections below. Given the diversity of the past and contemporary demographic patterns across countries, pooling the micro data for all or regionally selected countries is not attempted.

3.1.2 Analytical approach

The starting point for the description and analysis of family constellations is defining the kin network and its characteristics. Kin are generally defined as people related by blood (biological ties) or marriage/partnership. The core of a person's kin network include his/her immediate ascendant and descendant family members (parents and children) and a spouse/partner. Further along the vertical axis, lineal relationships formed by intergenerational links connect grandparents and grandchildren, and with increasing longevity and longer years of shared lives, family ties may extend to great-grandparents and great-grandchildren in four- and five-generation families. Along the horizontal axis, immediate collateral family ties relate to siblings. More distant kin relationships involve aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, cousins and other relatives. Increased union dissolution and repartnering over the past decades have added to the complexity of modern kin networks through growing experience of broken ties between biological kin and various step- and half ties in reconstituted families.

Against the backdrop of the potential complexity of contemporary kin relationships, the GGS focuses on the ties between the immediate family members,

[10] The authors of the report gratefully acknowledge the permission of the Population Activities Unit, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe to use the GGS data for the present analysis.

reflecting the central role of these ties in the provision of support (UNECE 2005). In particular, the survey collects information on the following types of kin:

- children
- parents
- grandchildren
- grandparents
- great-grandchildren
- partners
- siblings

The information on family members in each of these positions is collected irrespective of whether they are currently co-residing in the same household unit with the respondent or not. The GGS focuses primarily on biological kin, only with regard to children, complete information is available also on non-biological ties (adopted, foster- and stepchildren of the respondent).[11] Therefore, in this report we will also restrict ourselves mainly to the analysis of biological ties.

Regarding to the amount of details collected on specific kin, more information is available on children, parents and partners. For these immediate family members, the survey supplies retrospective information on the timing of the life course transitions that create and dissolve the respective relationships (formation and dissolution of partnerships, birth and death of children, death of parents and break-up of parental family). From the analytical point of view, this allows to extend the examination of family constellations beyond the cross-sectional view and apply the life course perspective to the core intergenerational ties. For grandchildren, the scope of information is more restricted but the data still includes some elements of timing/generational distance (birthdates of the youngest and oldest grandchild). For other types of kin — brothers, sisters, grandparents, great-grandchildren — the information is available on the count of kin in each position at the time of the survey. This also sets the cross-sectional view as is the lowest common denominator for the analysis.

[11] Information on non-co resident stepchildren covers the children of the current partner. Children of the former partners, not residing in respondent's household, remain beyond the scope of the survey.

In mapping the family constellations, we will proceed from the "egocentric" perspective. This implies that the survey informant serves for an anchor and the descending and ascending family generations are analysed from his/her position. In studies focusing on relatively narrow segments of the age spectrum, such an approach entails a problem of asymmetry — the fact that the views of intergenerational ties from the "top" of the family tree differ from the view generated from the "bottom" (Hagestad 2000). The broad age range of the target population of the GGS (from 18- to 79-year-olds) allows us to avoid the described bias by obtaining both "top-down" and "bottom-up" views from different parts of the sample and to contrast these perspectives in the analysis. From another angle, the complementarity of various perspectives is emphasised in the presence of both men and women among the survey population. Nonetheless, in interpreting the results it should be noted that groups at the extremes of age distribution (children and the oldest old) are not represented by our anchors.

At the first step, prevalence rates are calculated and analysed for each type of kin covered by the survey, indicating the proportion of individuals with specific types of kin available. Besides availability, the GGS also provides an insight into the characteristics of family members surrounding the reference individual in different age groups. The simplest characteristic recorded for all types of kin refers to the count of persons in a given location. The count of family members provides a measure of the size of the network, and depending on generational location concerned, gives an indication of the number of persons in "convoy of social support" (Antonucci 1990; Antonucci and Hirayama 1991) who can be called on for help during times of need, who may need care themselves, or with whom care responsibilities can be shared.

The analysis of kin characteristics can be refined by analysing the age and gender composition of family members surrounding the anchor. Regarding parents and grandparents, it is important to distinguish those who have reached advanced age, adding to the potential care burden of descendant kin. At the other end of the age spectrum, the presence of children and grandchildren, requiring considerable investments in caring time from ascendant family members. Interest in gender composition of kin members is largely driven by the differential involvement of men and women in "kin-keeping" (Rossi and Rossi 1990). Notwithstanding the latter considerations, systematic differences

between men and women in patterns of longevity, fertility and nuptiality require the analysis of family constellations to be gender-specific throughout. A further distinction is also made between family ties, intact and broken, due to divorce or separation. The influence of union break-up is not limited to partner relations but is known to affect intergenerational ties: parental divorce has a tendency to reduce the contacts and exchange in parent-child dyads, more so for divorced men (e.g. Fursterberg et al 1995; Lye et al 1995; Pezzin and Schone 1999).

At the second step, the evidence concerning the family generations above (parents and grandparents) and below (children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren) is combined to highlight the profile of generational structure in which individuals are embedded. This provides measures of the overall size of the kin network and the verticalization of family ties, resulting from the increased longevity and joint survival of successive family generations. By the same token, the balance of younger and older kin members reveals the prevailing top- or bottom-heaviness of the generational structure.

The information about the combined presence of ascendant and descendant kin determines the position of the reference individual in the family network. The position in generational structure (e.g. youngest, middle, oldest, or a "solo" individual without vertical ties) contributes to an understanding of the way family roles are enacted: the position people occupy in families is an indicator of commitment and responsibilities they have as well as resources available to them. The change in the distribution of individuals between these positions from one age group to another mirrors the transitions in family roles and the generational turnover that moves individuals from lower to higher positions in the generational structure.

In the policy framework, the combined inventory of kin allows to identify family configurations that may be problematic in terms of well-being and social integration. On one hand, this relates to individuals who are "vertically" and/or "horizontally" deprived, having no kin in respective directions. On the other hand, difficulties may arise from competing care demands or an unfavourable balance between potential carers and providers that may lead to overburdening with family obligations. The examination of family constellations also provides an account of gaps in family structure that shift the

care responsibility over to the next generation, from parents to grandparents, or from children to grandchildren.

In addressing the mentioned aspects of family constellations, the aim of the analysis is to map the similarities and dissimilarities in family constellations between the countries and regions of Europe. The results are expected to cast light on the ways how the variation in demographic regimes, with respect to longevity, fertility and nuptiality, comes together and translates into specific patterns of intergenerational structures. As noted earlier in the report, the patterning of these structures may not be straightforward since developments in underlying processes can produce a variety of combinations. The analysis seeks to provide an insight into the joint effects of these trends on the European family structures. The analysis of within-country variation between subgroups of the population, defined by socio-economic and cultural characteristics, will be dealt with and reported in the following stages of the project.

3.2 The patterns of kin availability

3.2.1 Children

Of all ties between family members, the parent-child relationship probably constitutes the most salient bond. Beyond its emotional meaning for individuals over their life course, this relationship ensures the demographic and social continuity of the population. As it is well documented by research, the transition of fertility and mortality from high to low levels has led to marked transformation in the pattern of ties between the ascendant and descendant generations (e.g. Foner 1978; Hagestad 1988). With regards to children, the spread of low and very low fertility in Europe since the late 1960s, and the ensuing shifts in the structure of the population discussed in the previous sections, implies that individuals in contemporary populations have fewer ties to descending kin compared to their predecessors.

Figure 3.1 presents the proportion of the adult population aged 20-79 with living biological children in the GGS countries included in the analysis, irrespective of co-

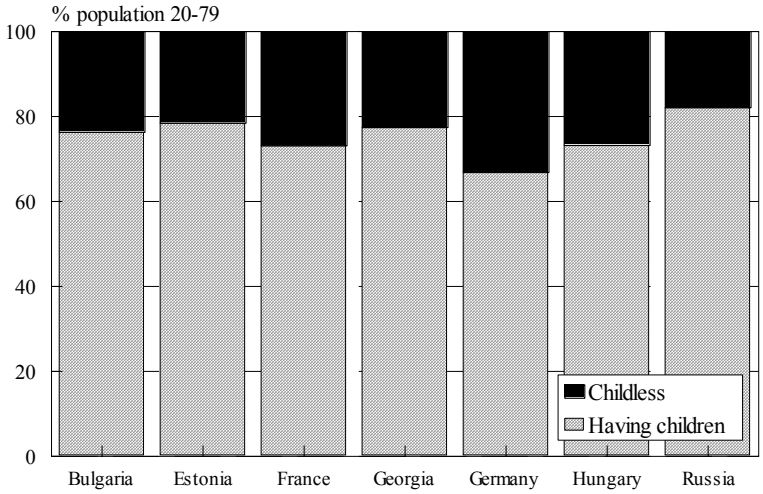
residence in the same household.[12] From the viewpoint of the anchor, the presence of children entails engagement in the parental role. The data reveal a noticeable variation in the relative number of individuals having at least one biological child. The proportion appears to be the lowest in Germany where only two thirds (67%) of the respondents were engaged in a parental role, while nearly a third of the population aged 20-79 are currently childless. Also, Germany is the only country where the proportion remains under 70%. At the other end of the spectrum, in the Russian Federation the proportion of adults with children amounts to 82% which leaves the share of childless respondents almost twice as low in Germany. Among the remaining countries, France and Hungary feature similar levels around 73%, in Bulgaria and Estonia the proportion with children is somewhat higher.[13]

The pattern described above provides a comprehensive, but on the other hand a fairly crude account of the availability of descending kin. To understand what underlies the observed differentials, it is necessary to look into the factors that shape the prevalence of children among the adult population. In the life course framework, it can be seen as a combined outcome of at lest three different influences. First of all, as the ties under consideration are generated by fertility, the prevalence of children depends on the proportion of adults who ever become parents. The complement of the latter represents ultimate childlessness at the end of the effective reproductive period, around the mid-40s for women and somewhat later for men. The second influence relates to the timing of the entry into parenthood. With other things being equal, an earlier transition to mother- and fatherhood is bound to raise the prevalence of children in the cross-sectional snapshot, which in the longitudinal view extends the duration of shared lives of child and parental generations. Finally, the decline in infant, child and adult mortality also positively adds to the availability of children over the life course, particularly towards old age. As the trends in childbearing and longevity are relatively independent from each other, their role in underlying the patterns of child availability merits separate examination.

[12] To account for the variation in lower and upper age limits of the samples and ensure better comparability between different countries, respondents under age 20 and over age 79 were excluded from the analysis. By the same token, excluded were 55 respondents for whom the age was unknown in the dataset.

[13] It should be noted that the general measures of kin availability are to some extent affected by the differences in the age structure of the population between countries. The consideration of these differences, not shown here, may slightly alter the position of individual countries. However, this does not affect the general pattern.

Figure 3.1. *Kin availability: children. GGS countries*

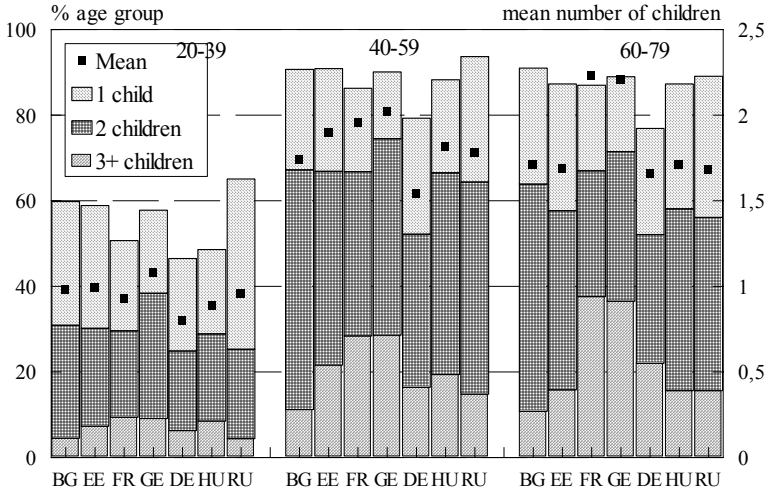


Source: GGS database

The contribution of fertility patterns is in greater detail highlighted in Figure 3.2 which presents the mean number of children and parity distribution in three aggregate age groups. Among the latter, the young adults aged 20-39 currently pass the prime stage of family formation, which understandably explains their high level of childlessness. Unlike middle-aged and older population, among young adults the measures of child availability are affected by the postponement of childbearing. Following the cycle of rejuvenation in the timing of family formation during the post-war baby-boom, the move towards later parenthood began in northern and western Europe and has been under way for the past 3-4 decades. Among the countries included in the analysis, this is characteristic of France and Germany where vital statistics reported the mean age of women at first birth 28-29 years at the time of the GGS data collection (Council of Europe 2006). In eastern Europe the onset of this fundamental shift, termed "postponement transition" by Kohler, Billari and Ortega (2002), largely coincides with the societal transformation of the 1990s. Among the Eastern European countries included in the analysis, in 2005 Hungarian women featured 26.7 years of age at first birth, in the Russian Federation the transition to parenthood occurred still at noticeably earlier age 24.1 (Eurostat 2009; Zakharov 2008). The referred differentials in the timing of parenthood exert a noticeable influence on the presence of children among young adults.

Among the middle-aged and older population, where the effect of timing may be disregarded, the variation in child availability appears smaller. Germany stands out for the highest childlessness: it is the only country among those included in the analysis where the proportion of childless exceeds one fifth of the population, among both middle-aged and elderly population. This pattern pinpoints the consequences of persistent very low fertility as in Germany (western part) the period total fertility has been below 1.5 ever since 1975; the latter is well in line with the mean number of children for middle-aged population revealed in our figure. At the same time, between the remaining countries the differences in the proportion of individuals having children is limited to just 4-5 percentage points, though there is a somewhat greater variability with respect to parity distribution. In the age group 60-79, against the background of fairly high and even proportion of individuals (Germany excepted), the child supply seems to be most favorable in Georgia and France where nearly 40% of the respondents aged 60+ have three or more children, an advantage also reflected in the mean number of children.

Figure 3.2. *Kin availability: children by aggregate age groups. GGS countries*



Source: GGS database

The findings above indicate that in most countries of Europe, 85-90% of contemporary elderly have at least one biological child. The same situation holds true for the generations of middle-aged who will dominate the older population after 2025. Apparently, there is more variation with respect to the number of children. Although no

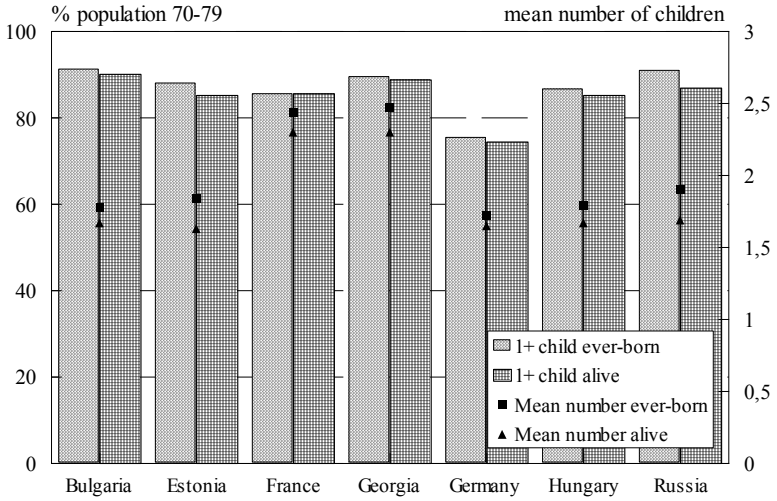
dramatic shifts are in store for the next 20 years, the evidence presented in Figure 3.2 shows that in some countries the child supply available to the elderly tends to increase while in the others it can be expected to decrease, contingent on the country-specific developments in the cohort fertility (e.g. Frejka and Sardon 2004). With regards to the youngest age group 20-39, the ultimate level of childlessness and final parity distribution of these generations (born after the mid-1960s) is still in part a matter of conjecture. It hinges on the extent to which the births these cohorts have foregone in their 20s will be recuperated at the later stages of reproductive career. There are indications that the degree of recuperation is likely to vary across regions and countries of Europe (e.g. Frejka and Sobotka 2008) but an in-depth exploration of this issue would take us beyond the aims of this report. Still, whatever the outcome, it will have direct implications on family constellations of the future.

Compared to fertility, differences in longevity exert only limited influence on child supply. Such conclusion is inferred from the comparison of ever-born and surviving children. As the difference between these two entities tends to increase with age, Figure 3.3 seeks evidence from the oldest age group covered by the survey (70-79). The first-born children of the respondents in this group have reached 44-46 years of age by the time of the GGS. Even at low levels of mortality, surviving until mid-40s entails a considerable exposure to infant, child and adult mortality. Also, in passing from childhood to middle-age, these generations of children in all countries experienced higher mortality than currently observed.

Against that background, the difference between the proportion of elderly having children ever-born and children alive is quite small. Consistent with the levels of mortality that have prevailed in the countries since the early 1960s, it is not surprising to find the largest difference for the Russian Federation and Estonia, with 4 and 3 percentage points respectively. Bulgaria, Hungary and Germany feature the difference 1.1-1.6 percentage points, in Georgia and France it appears even under 1 percentage point. At first glance, these low figures may perhaps raise doubts about misreporting the deaths of children, particularly in case they had occurred in infancy or early childhood. To account for this, the GGS results were compared to corresponding life table measures.

The results, not reported here in detail, indicate good consistency for countries with the most frequent loss of children.

Figure 3.3. *Kin availability: ever-born and surviving children. GGS countries*



Source: GGS database

In the Russian Federation and Estonia, on average a person aged 70-79 had lost 0.21 children (11% of children ever-born). In parental perspective this implies that roughly one person in five has lost a child before reaching his/her 75th birthday in these countries. The corresponding figures are lowest for Germany, with the average loss of 0.07 children (4% of children ever-born), i.e. about a third of the level observed in Russian Federation and Estonia. This seeming discrepancy between the reported sets of measures — reduction in child availability (no more than 4 percentage points) and the proportion of elderly who had experienced a loss of a child (up to 20%) — reveals the protective role of a larger family. Since only a minority of couples limit themselves to having a single child, there will usually be other children around even if the tragic events occur.[14]

Despite the improvements in child survival characteristic of contemporary populations and relatively minor impact on kin availability, the salience of a children's death for family relations and well-being of individuals should not be overlooked.

[14] The data reveal considerable variation in the protective effect of parity across countries. For instance in the age group 70-79, the proportion of elderly with only one child ranges from 16% in Georgia to 32% in the Russian Federation.

Somewhat paradoxically, it is precisely the decreasing probability of the event that makes the adjustment more difficult — it is generally agreed upon in the life course research that transitions that are not anticipated and happen to a few are much more problematic than changes that are expected (Atchley 1975; Hagestad 1988). Furthermore, a small number of children in the family may make each parent-child relationship more intense, and therefore, the death of a child may represent a more devastating psychological blow than was the case earlier (Skolnick 1978). The rectangularisation of the survival curve evidently shifts such experiences to the later stage of a parents' life where the dependence is likely to increase.

3.2.2 Parents

Owing to simple biological reality, parents are always included in the life of an individual. Despite the alleged shrinking in the functions of the family in contemporary societies (Goode 1963; Popenoe 1988), parents continuously assume the central responsibility for the upbringing of children and the parental home has not ceased to serve as a *locus* where primary socialization occurs. Unlike the relationship with descending kin, the ties with parents are not directly affected by fertility. Leaving the effects of union break-up to be discussed later, mortality alone accounts for the variations in the availability of parents. Thus, mortality within the parental generation constitutes the main factor that configures family ties stretching upward from the anchor. As the death of one's parents is inevitable, the core of the issue boils down to the timing of this transition in the life course.

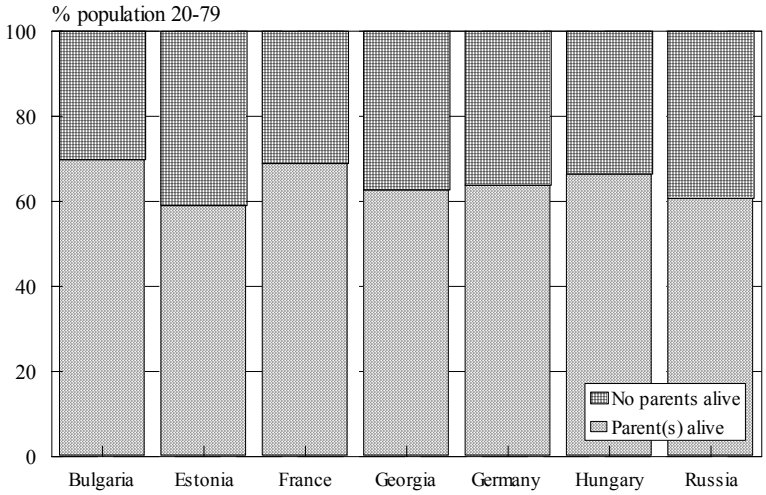
Figure 3.4 depicts the present proportion of the population aged 20-79 with at least one biological parent alive. Overall, in all the countries included in the analysis a clear majority of the adults have ascending family members above them. Consistent with the levels and trends in life expectancy, the lowest prevalence of parental ties is characteristic of Estonia and the Russian Federation, with 59% and 60.7% respectively.[15] Both countries experienced a remarkably long stagnation in adult mortality that set in the 1960s (Vallin, Meslé and Valkonen 2001). Despite some fluctuations, mortality saw

[15] In calculating the measures, the cases in which respondents were not sure whether their parent(s) were alive or not, were exluded. The proportion of excluded cases ranged between 1.3% and 6.9%.

virtually no improvements until the late 1980s, followed by a sharp deterioration in the early 1990s (the male life expectancy at birth surged below 60 years). Although Estonia has witnessed a noticeable reduction of mortality over the past decade and half, the family constellations still mirror the cumulative imprint of the past.

The countries with the highest prevalence of ascending intergenerational ties are Bulgaria (70% with at least one parent alive) and France (69%). Judging upon the statistics of life expectancy — 69 years for men and 76.2 years for women in 2005 in Bulgaria (Eurostat 2009), with relatively little change since the 1970s — the top-ranking position of Bulgaria seems somewhat surprising. This draws attention to yet another factor — the timing of childbearing in the parental generation — which exerts an indirect influence on the availability of ascending kin. In particular, the age at which our reference individual (anchor) is born determines the reference point in the parents' life course starting from which the shared survival of generations is counted. Among the countries included in the analysis, Bulgaria features the shortest generational distance between the anchor and his/her parents (26.3 years). For France, the corresponding figure amounts to 29 years; the longest generational distance is featured by Estonia (29.6 years). In the remaining countries, Georgia, Germany and Hungary, the proportion with at least one living parent ranges between 63 and 66%.

Figure 3.4. *Kin availability: parents. GGS countries*



Source: GGS database

Compared to the availability of children discussed in the previous section, the overall variability in parental ties appears somewhat smaller. From a conceptual point of view, the latter observation could be regarded as support for the assertion that of the two major components of generational replacement, fertility has played a more conspicuous role in shaping the cross-national differences in contemporary family constellations. This was also suggested by the macro-level analysis in the previous section of this report.

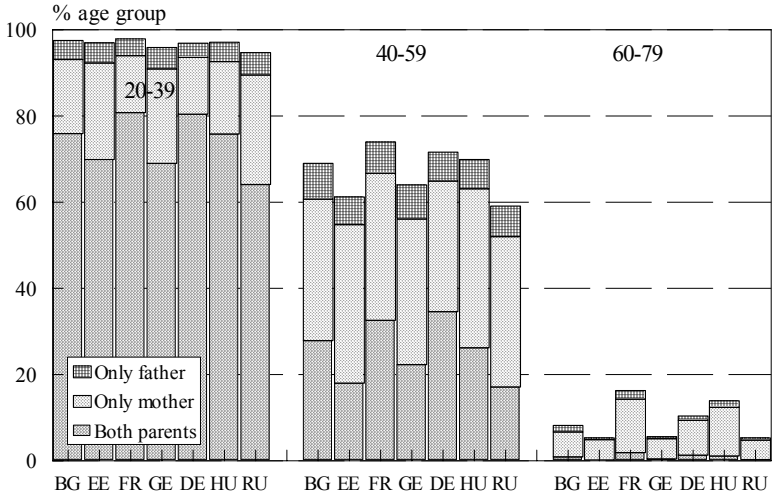
Figure 3.5 presents the profile of parental ties comparatively for young adult, middle-aged and older population. In today's Europe, it appears rather uncommon for people under the age 40 to have lost both of their biological parents. Even with very high mortality by modern standards, 95% of young adults have at least one parent alive. In countries that are more advanced in terms of the health transition, the corresponding proportion amounts to 98%. In the age group 20-39, the bulk of diversity relates to the question whether a person has both or one parent surviving. Although the former appears the prevailing situation for young adults in all the countries included in the analysis, the proportion of young adults having both mother and father alive varies from 80-81% in France and Germany to 64% in the Russian Federation. Understandably, the shares of those with single parent, typically mother, and surviving, display an opposite gradient.

Although the likelihood of having ascending kin is significantly reduced when moving to the next group, more than three fifths of middle age Europeans (ages 40-59) have parent(s) around. The cross-country variation tends to grow larger reflecting the accumulation of mortality differentials over the life course of the parental generation; the countries at the top and bottom of the ranking remain the same however. As observed in the case of young adults, France tops the list with 74% of its middle-aged population having at least one parent alive; on the other extreme, among the same age group in Russia, the respective figure is 59%.

Against the backdrop of decreasing availability of ascending kin, another characteristic feature of middle-aged population relates to the shifting proportion between individuals having both parents alive and those with only one surviving parent: in all the countries concerned, the latter clearly outnumbers the former. In the age group 40-59, only a minority of contemporary Europeans have both mother and father alive. In the countries that are more advanced in terms of life expectancy, the corresponding

proportions amount to one third of the population in middle age groups (35% in Germany and 33% in France). In the countries with relatively high mortality over the past decades, the chances for middle-aged people to have two surviving parents are about twice lower (17% in the Russian Federation and 18% in Estonia). In the life course perspective, these percentages suggest that in the middle-age groups the loss of a parent, typically the father, becomes an experience shared by a majority (65%-83%) of the population.

Figure 3.5. *Kin availability: parents by aggregate age groups. GGS countries*



Source: GGS database

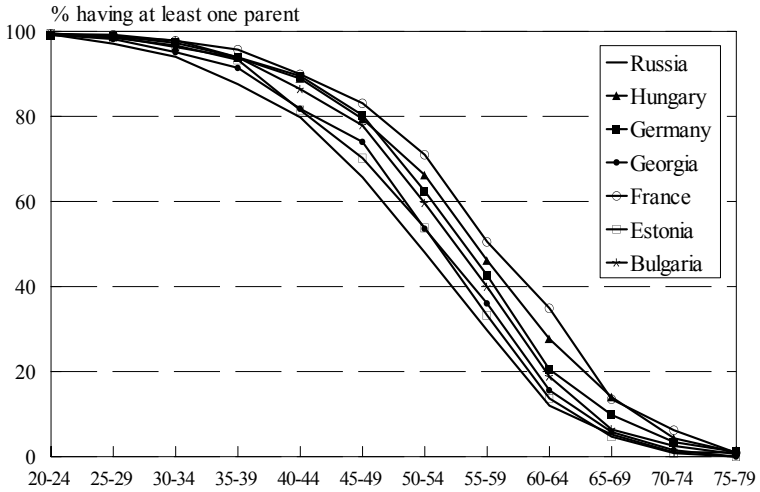
Among the older population, unbroken parental ties gradually become an exception. At the same time it is interesting to note, however, that even under the relatively unfavorable mortality conditions, the chance of having at least one parent alive at age 60-79 is currently more common than the likelihood of losing both parents during young adulthood. The prevalence of intact parental ties appear highest in France where nearly one in six older persons (16%) have at least one surviving parent, followed by Hungary and Germany where the corresponding proportion also exceeds one tenth. In countries with higher mortality, about 5% of the older age group have an ascending kin. However, for older population to have two living parents appears exceptional even in the countries with advanced longevity: in France, for instance, 2% in the age group 60-79 have both mother and father alive.

Figure 3.6 presents a more refined account of parental ties using the breakdown into five-year age groups. The level above 99% among 20-24 year-olds in all the countries confirms the assertion that (complete) orphanhood in childhood and adolescence has become an exceptional event in modern societies. As noted above, it implies that for a small minority hit by such an unexpected event, the consequences are very severe and require efficient intervention and rehabilitation. Moving forward along the age scale, the prevalence of parental ties sets in an accelerating decline and the differences between countries emerge and grow larger. These differences reach full scale in the middle age groups, with only a few cross-overs they follow a rather stable pattern between the age groups 45-49 and 60-64.

In the life course perspective, the observed differences in the age-related decline in the prevalence rates of kin availability draw attention to considerable diversity in the timing of the death of parents. If interpreted in the synthetic cohort framework, this translates into the spread of about 10 years in the age at which the loss of parent(s) occurs in contemporary Europe, with implications to time-span people remain sons and daughters during their life.[16] For the individuals in the role of the anchor, the death of a last surviving parent brings about a shift one notch upward in the family lineage. In this view, the transition to "omega" position tends to occur at a markedly different point in the life course.

[16] The evidence presented in Figure 3.6 relates to the death of the last surviving parent (usually the mother). Similar calculations performed for the loss of the first parent (usually the father) , not shown here, reveal even greater differences owing to larger disparity in male life extectancy between the countries.

Figure 3.6. *Kin availability: parents by 5-year age groups. GGS countries*



Source: GGS database

The variation in the timing of the latter event relates to the diversity of the " interwoven" biographies of the linked generations, the individual and family context in which the loss of parental ties occurs (Hagestad 1988). For instance, it affects the degree to which children with elderly parents have entered the empty nest stage, following the period of active parenting, and become grandparents themselves. By the same token, it has implications to the chances that two generations of retirees will co-exist, supporting each other and on the patterns of inheritance and wealth transmission across generations (e.g. Langbein 1988; Avery and Rendall 2002). And last but not least, the tempo of age-related deterioration in the functional status forms an important part of the equation.

3.2.3 Grandchildren

Disproving some popular myths about the family in pre-modern settings, since the 1960s research in historical demography has convincingly demonstrated that under a high mortality regime, relatively few people had a chance to develop ties across several generations (Levy 1965; Laslett and Wall 1972; Wrigley 1977). People usually died before their offspring had become parents or shortly thereafter, and no less importantly, the very high infant and child mortality reduced the overlap of a larger number of family generations from the other end. It was only the demographic transition in the 19th and

20th centuries that markedly increased the potential for family relationships that extend beyond the immediate ties between the adjacent generations of parents and children.

The most prevalent of these historically novel links in the family structure of population is between grandchildren and grandparents. Compared to parent-child ties discussed in the previous sections, the mentioned relationship appears more complex (Sprey and Matthews 1982; Crosnoe and Elder 2002). It represents a bond that simultaneously links several, rather than two generations — the ties between grandchildren and grandparents do not connect these generations directly but are mediated by the generation of adults. In this web of relations, each of the actors engage in multiple roles that interact and inevitably influence each other. The middle generation holds a role of parent towards their children but remains to be children for their parents, the older generation combines the parenting and grandparenting while the youngest engages parallel in the child's and grandchild's role.

In the life course perspective, the described complexity enters the scene right from the outset of the relationship. Unlike the transition to parental role, the entry into grandparenthood is not self-initiated, i.e. it constitutes a counter transition which is produced by the life changes of the others (Hagestad and Neugraten 1985). Putting aside the decision to become a parent, the emergence of a grandchild-grandparent relationship, the timing of the first grandchild as well the spacing of the additional grandchildren is from the outset beyond the immediate control of both parties, but nonetheless, the transition significantly modulates the profile of the relationship. Sometimes the actual transition to grandparenthood has been conceptualized as a two step process, since the birth of a grandchild is usually preceded by the partnering of an adult child (Sprey and Matthews 1982). This is not a trivial point because it is the acquisition of the first in-law child that involves parents in a newly extended family constellation of which their own family nucleus will remain a part for the rest of their lives. As in the case of grandchildren, the linkage to the in-law children is indirect and initiated by their own child.

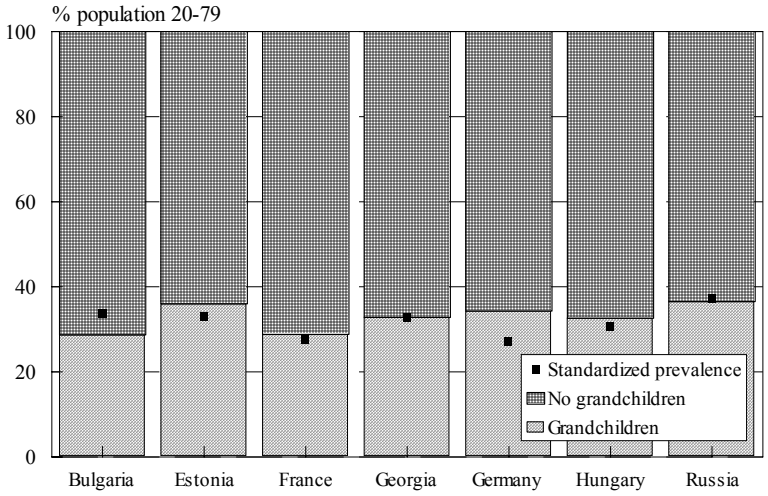
The dependence of ties on the behavior of multiple generations and different processes makes the outcomes less evident. In scholarly literature, there are indications about the transmission of demographic patterns from one generation to the next (e.g. with

respect to timing of parenthood, family size, union stability etc) which has a potential to cumulate in the intergenerational family structure. The present and following subsection explore from the cross-country perspective how the demographic behavior comes together across multiple generations. Against the background of the evidence pertaining to parent-child relationship, the uniqueness of the account derived from the GGS on the grandchild-grandparent ties should be underscored since these ties lie completely beyond the grasp of conventional demographic data sources (census and vital statistics).

To follow the model of earlier sections and start from discussing the general measures, the overall prevalence of multigenerational ties among the population appears expectedly lower than that of adjacent generations (Figure 3.7). Grandchildren can be born only to the part of the adult population who are parents themselves and whose offspring have reached reproductive age. Over the recent decades, the trend towards increasing childlessness among younger generations and the postponement of childbearing that has spread to all regions of the continent has been counterbalancing the effect of increasing co-longevity of generations. Overall, in contemporary Europe, roughly one third of the adult population aged 20-79 has entered grandparenthood. Across countries, the prevalence of grandchildren varies from 29% in Bulgaria and France to 36-37% in Estonia and the Russian Federation. However, these percentages should be regarded with reservation since they are strongly affected by differences in the age structure of the population across countries.[17] Other things being equal, the more advanced the stage of demographic ageing the country has reached (the higher the proportion of the elderly), the higher appears the prevalence of multigenerational ties judged from the general measures. This assertion was confirmed by the calculation of age-adjusted prevalence measures, using the total population of Europe (2005) as a standard. Adjusted measures are also presented on the figure 3.7.

[17] Given the lower prevalence, the measures representing multigenerational ties are more sensitive to variations related to the age structure than the measures that charaterise ties between adjacent generations.

Figure 3.7. *Kin availability: grandchildren. GGS countries*



Source: GGS database

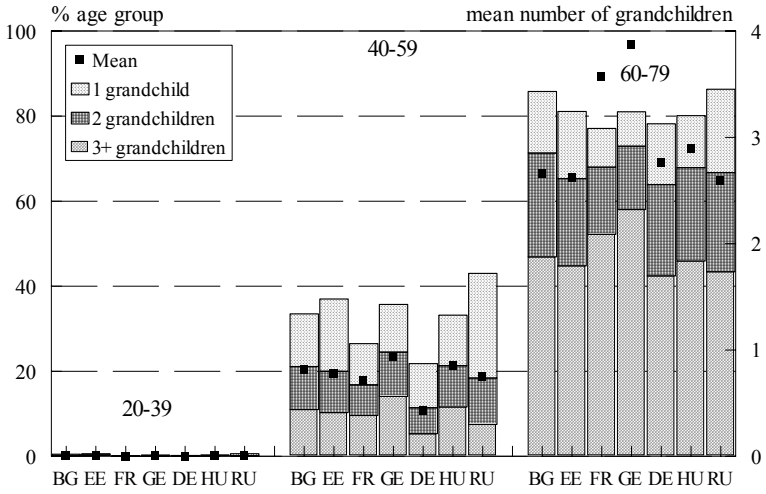
Figure 3.8 reports the prevalence and the number of grandchildren for three aggregate age groups, representing young adult, middle-aged and older population. These data suggest that at the beginning of the 21st century, in Europe the transition to grandparenthood typically occurs in mid-life, with the modal age following the 50th birthday. This can be inferred from the fact that in all countries included in the analysis, the prevalence of grandchildren in the middle-age group remains at the level clearly below 50%. On average, about one third of the age group 40-59 has entered grandparenthood, with approximately 0.8 grandchildren per one middle-aged adult.[18] At the same time, the data reveal a considerable variation across individual countries. In the Russian Federation, the proportion of grandparents amounts to 43% of the respondents in the middle-age group while in Germany the corresponding proportion is limited to only 22%. Similarly, the mean number of grandchildren yields an almost twofold difference between the countries, with Georgia topping the list. The fact that the variation in the prevalence of grandchildren among the middle-age group exceeds the variation observed in the prevalence of children among young adults seems to confirm the assertion

[18] It should be noted that the GGS collected information only on living grandchildren. As a result, the measures presented in this section slightly understate the cumulative experience of grandparenthood since they do not account for grandchildren who may have died by the time of the survey. However, the evidence pertaining to the survival of children suggests that the bias is very small.

concerning the accumulation of behavioral patterns across generations at the country-level.

Reflecting the course of transition to grandparenthood, among the older population the prevalence of grandchildren reaches markedly higher levels, averaging around 80%. This finding underscores the salience of grandparenthood as an integral part of contemporary family relations after midlife. As the influence of timing in the entry to grandparenthood grows smaller with age, the cross-country variation in the prevalence of grandchildren appears much smaller among the older population than in the middle age groups. Among the countries included in the analysis, somewhat lower levels are characteristic of France and Germany (77-78%). In all the remaining countries, more than four fifths of the population aged 60-79 are engaged in a grandparent role, with the highest levels in Bulgaria and the Russian Federation (86%).

Figure 3.8. *Kin availability: grandchildren by aggregate ge groups. GGS countries*



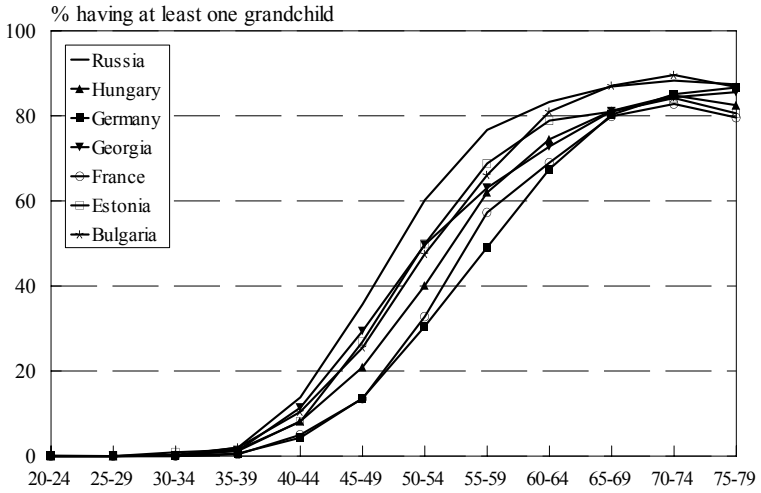
Source: GGS database

The average number (and parity distribution) of grandchildren seem to be fairly independent of the reported prevalence rates. Such conclusion is substantiated by the fact that the country with the highest prevalence of grandchildren (the Russian Federation) features the lowest number of grandchildren. Similarly, the country with the lowest prevalence of grandchildren (France) ranks near the top in terms of the number, next only to Georgia. The comparison of the proportion of respondents having children and

grandchildren indicates a tendency towards a stronger polarization of reproductive outcomes across generations. In almost all countries included in the analysis, with the slight exception of Germany[19], the proportion of respondents without grandchildren exceeds the proportion of childless people among the elderly. Together with noticeable variation in the number of grandchildren, this points to a considerable diversity in the grandparenting experience that exists between the countries but more importantly within the national populations.

As noted above, the variation in the prevalence and number of grandchildren stems from two complementary, but relatively independent factors: the timing of childbearing and the ultimate childlessness. To distinguish between the contribution of these factors, Figure 3.9 presents the prevalence of grandchildren, i.e. the entry into grandparenthood in five-year age groups. Starting from the age group 40-44, the data reveal a rapid increase of differences in the proportion of people who have become grandparents, the cross-national differences peak shortly after age 50 at a remarkably high level. Among 50-54 year olds, the proportion of grandparents ranges from 60% in the Russian Federation to 31-33% in Germany and France. In the remaining countries, grandparents account for less than half of the 50-54 year olds.

Figure 3.9. *Kin availability: grandchildren by 5-year age groups. GGS countries*



Source: GGS database

[19] The specific pattern characteristic of Germany is plausibly accounted for by the very high levels of childlessness that have persisted ever since the birth cohorts of the late 1940s (e.g. Kreyenfeld 2004; 2006).

The pattern observed in the middle age-groups primarily stems from the differentials in the timing of childbearing, cumulated across parental and grandparental generations. In the life course framework, the age profiles presented in Figure 3.9 imply roughly to a 10 year spread in the modal ages of transition to grandparenthood in contemporary Europe. Given the accumulation of behavioral patterns across generations, it comes as no surprise that the range of cross-country differences at timing of grandparenthood markedly exceed the variation in the entry into parenthood.[20] When moving to older age groups, the role of the timing of life course transitions gradually decreases and from age 65-69, the cross-country differences in the prevalence of multigenerational ties converge to 6-7 percentage points. To this end it is interesting to note that in the oldest age group covered by the survey (75-79), the countries with an extreme difference in the middle-aged population (Germany and the Russian Federation) display a complete convergence in the prevalence of multigenerational ties.

The above findings suggest that the role of the timing of life course transitions grows in salience towards multigenerational ties and it seems to be a key determinant of cross-national differences in grandparenting. Its implications relate to the duration of interaction, set by the length of the shared life-span, and stretch to the life course context of both generations involved between which it occurs. The previous research provides evidence that these aspects are highly relevant for the nature of multigenerational bonds (e.g. Barranti 1985; Uhlenberg and Kirby 1998)

3.2.4 Grandparents

The present section addresses the same intergenerational relationship that was discussed in the previous section. However, instead of applying the "top-down" view it follows the "bottom-up" perspective and examines the availability of grandparents from the viewpoint of younger generations. The main difference between the views offered by these two complementary analytical perspectives stems from perhaps a trivial distinction between the ascending and descending kin relations. Unlike the ties with children and

[20] In 2005, the mean age of a mother at first birth ranged from 24,1 years in the Russian Federation to 29.1 years in Germany (Eurostat 2009; Zakharov 2008).

grandchildren, which people may have or have not, every individual is born from two biological parents and four grandparents.

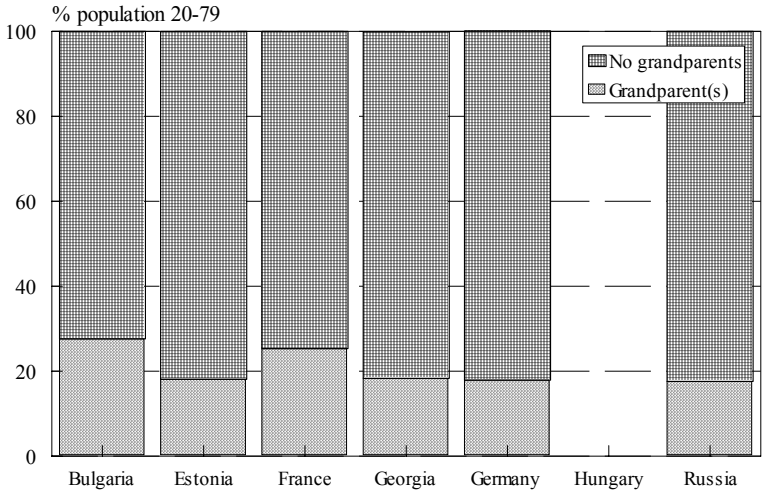
Of the underlying demographic factors, mortality then mainly accounts for the duration of how long these relationships are preserved and at which stage in the life course of the descending generations the ties are broken. For grandparents, the exposure to mortality and the break-up of intergenerational ties starts well before the grandchildren are born, during childhood and adolescence of the intermediate generation. Further, taking the cohort perspective, it is obvious that the grandparents of the GGS generations have lived under less favorable mortality conditions than their children and grandchildren. Assuming the average distance between generations to be 27.5 years[21], the bulk of grandparents of the GGS generations were born in the period between the 1870s and 1930s. In the context of history, this implies the exposure to the First and the Second World Wars, and in many countries mass repression implemented by the totalitarian political regimes. Although the effects of the referred historical cataclysms are no more discernible in our data as the badly hit cohorts have passed away, they have surely affected the family constellations in the childhood of many generations of the GGS respondents.

On average, in the countries included in the analysis, about one fifth of the population aged 20-79 has at least one parent still alive (Figure 3.10). Against the backdrop of the prevalence of grandchildren, the lower availability of grandparents stems from the restriction of the survey sample to the adult population and the exclusion of children and adolescents among which the likelihood of having grandparents reaches the highest levels. Regarding the general prevalence of grandparent ties, the countries are quite clearly divided into two distinct groups. In Bulgaria and France, fourth of the respondents (27% and 25%) had grandparent(s) still alive at the time of the survey. Interestingly, in these two countries, the likelihood of having a grandparent lag only slightly behind the likelihood of having grandchildren among the GGS respondents. In the rest of the countries, the prevalence of grandparent ties appears noticeably lower.[22] In

[21] The GGS does not provide information about the generational distance between the respondent and his/her grandparents. In the survey, only the number of grandparents currently alive was recorded.
[22] The harmonised datafiles of the Hungarian GGS did not include information about grandparents, therefore the present section presents the results of six countries.

Estonia, Georgia, Germany and the Russian Federation, the levels are clustered at around 18%, in relative terms the percentage is 1.8-2.1 times lower than the likelihood of having grandchildren.

Figure 3.10. *Kin availability: grandparents. GGS countries*



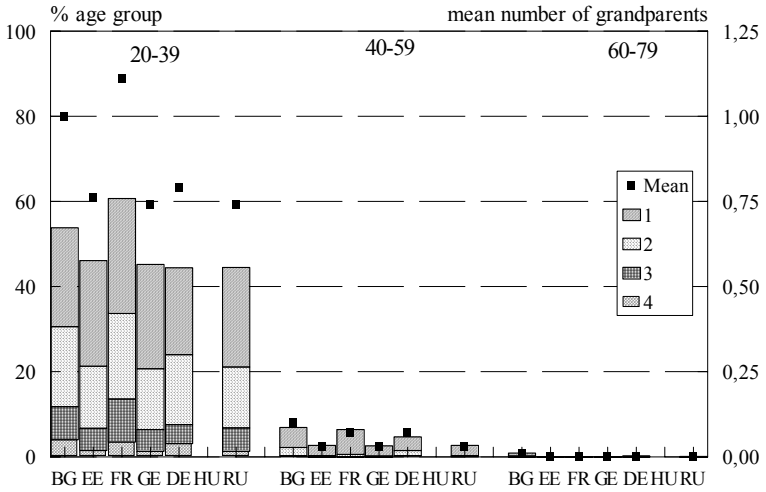
Source: GGS database

Figure 3.11 adds some further details by presenting the number of surviving grandparents in three aggregate age-groups. In all countries for which the data on grandparents is available, these ties are typically maintained until young adulthood. In the age-group 20-39, on average about half of the population has at least one grandparent alive. In France, the corresponding proportion amounts to 61% while in Estonia, Georgia, Germany and the Russian Federation it does not yet exceed 44-46%. Cross-country differences in the number of surviving grandparents follow a largely similar pattern. Reflecting the prevailing gender difference in longevity, grandmothers strongly outnumber grandfathers in all countries.

A more refined breakdown of age-groups, not presented in the figure, reveals that a strong majority of 20-24-year olds still has one or several living grandparents, with the proportion ranging from 84% in France to 71% in Germany. In this context, the lowest ranking of Germany comes to some extent as a surprise, given the country's relatively advanced life expectancy. Against the background of eastern Europe, this could be explained by the higher age at childbearing, cumulated across generations, which may

reduce the shared survival of grandparents and grandchildren. However, this explanation hardly holds for the observed difference with France. Neither can the finding be accounted for major historical events since owing to their birth years, the grandparents of today's young adults largely escaped the heavy demographic toll of the Second World War. To this end it is interesting to note that the proportion of young adults having grandparents tends to exceed the relative number of middle-aged people with parents alive, discussed earlier in the report. A particularly pronounced difference in this respect can be found in Estonia and the Russian Federation where the former exceeds the latter by more than 1.5 times. On the other hand, in Germany the proportion of young adults with grandparents alive is slightly lower than the proportion of middle-aged with parents. Evidently, such patterns add to the diversity of intergenerational relationships that can be found across contemporary Europe.

Figure 3.11. *Kin availability: grandparents by aggregate age groups. GGS countries*



Source: GGS database

To sum up, the observed levels in the availability of grandparents among young adults imply that intergenerational ties between grandchildren and grandparents frequently span 3 or 4 decades with 1 or 2 of these decades involving adult grandparent/grandchild relationships. Unlike in the past, contemporary grandparents increasingly see their grandchildren grow up, complete education, start independent living, form their families and have children. By the same token, these changes are

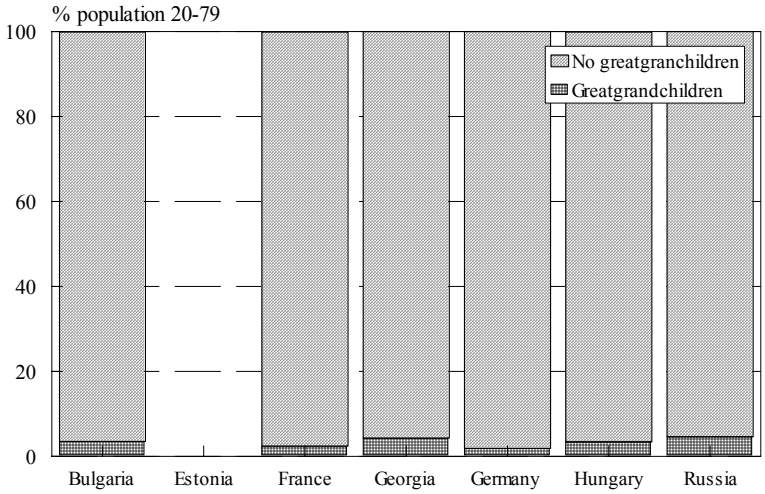
introducing new dimensions and aspects into the grandparent-grandchild relationships and roles, extending the salience of multigenerational bonds in contemporary societies.

3.2.5 Great-grandchildren

In the previous sections the ties involving three generations were explored. In modern societies with growing life expectancy people will more and more face with ties over three generations. The transition into great-parenthood and great-great-parenthood is becoming more prevalent over time. In particular, taking into account the gender gap in longevity, it becomes more so for female population. In the GGS, the data about the ties overarching over three generations were collected in regard to great-grandchildren.

The overall prevalence of great-grandchildren cannot be high among the general population, since only part of grandparents, those whose grandchildren have reached adulthood and are having children themselves, can have great-grandchildren. According to GGS, the overall prevalence of great-grandchildren ranges between 2-4% among the population aged 20-79 (Figure 3.12). Across the countries, the highest levels (4.6% and 4.3%) are observed in the Russian Federation and Georgia while the lowest levels (1.9% and 2.4%) are characteristic of Germany and France. On average, this makes about 1/10 on the prevalence of grandchildren but it must be remembered that the GGS samples exclude population aged 80 and over among which chances of having grandchildren are the highest. Estonia did not collect information on great-grandchildren and is excluded from the analysis.

Figure 3.12. *Kin availability: great-grandchildren. GGS countries*



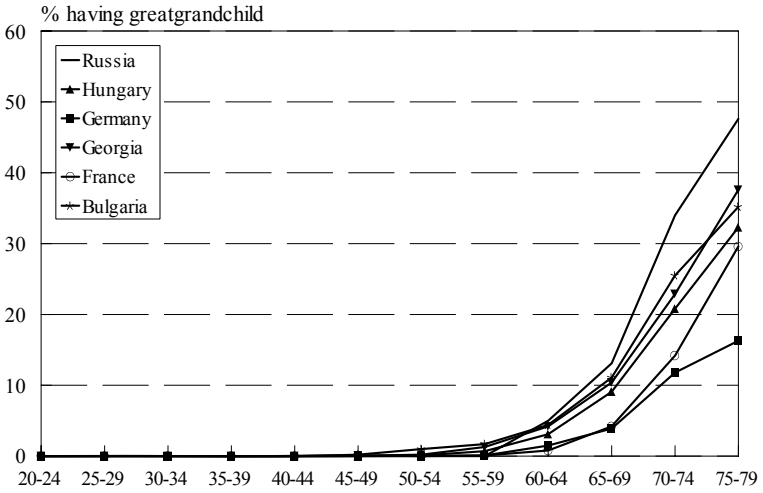
Source: GGS database

The low general prevalence, however, does not imply that the proportion of individuals having great-grandchildren is so low if to focus on older age groups. In fact, after age 60 the age-specific prevalence starts to increase rapidly and in the oldest age group it reaches quite high levels (Figure 3.13). In all countries in our analysis for population aged 75-79 the presence of at least one great-grandchildren ranges from 30% to 48%. The only exception forms Germany where the prevalence of great-grandchildren in this age group is almost twice less than in the country with the second lowest prevalence (France). About half of the population aged 75-79 have two or more great-grandchildren.

The ranking of the countries by this indicator with the Russian federation at the top, followed by Georgia and Bulgaria, indicates towards the fact that in this type of multigenerational ties the timing of childbearing has much stronger impact than the longevity of population. Russia and Bulgaria are characterized among the analyzed GGS countries by the relatively early childbearing patterns and rapid generational turnover, on one hand, but clearly Russia also has displayed the lowest levels of life expectancy over time among these countries, which seems to have had much less impact on the prevalence of great-grandchildren for the country. However, it has to be noted that the observed cross-country differences are contingent on the underlying cross-sectional view, imposed by the data. If we would apply the longitudinal perspective and consider also the

proportion of individuals surviving to these relatively advanced ages, then we might end up with somewhat different results.

Figure 3.13. *Kin availability: great-grandchildren by 5-year age groups. GGS countries*



Source: GGS database

To sum up the findings pertaining to great-grandchildren, to an important extent they resemble the patterns reported in historical studies for the ties with grandchildren. Similarly, under pre-modern populations, particularly west of Hajnal line, the prevalence of grandchildren was rather low in the general population and the ties between grandparents and grandchildren were of relatively short duration. What this analogy tells us, is that demographic transition has added at least one layer of vertical ties to an average family tree.

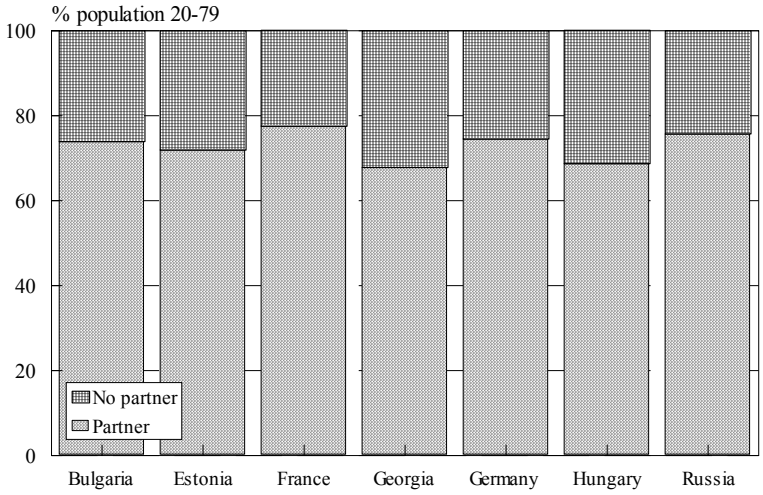
3.2.6 Partners

Partners are the essential and central part of the family ties, however, the process of formation of partnerships has had some historical divergencies and convergencies, which have shaped today's family constellations across Europe. The most important historical differences are marked by what has become known as 'the Hajnal line' (Hajnal 1965). To the east of this line - which runs from Saint Petersburg to Trieste - marriage was early and almost universal, whereas to the west of it, marriage was delayed and many people never married at all. Hajnal himself pointed out that such a difference had become obsolete in Europe by the WW II, signaling for convergencies in partnership formation patterns. Starting from the 1960s onwards, new behavior patterns started to manifest themselves, bringing about the next round of divergent trends across Europe. Rates of marriage and remarriage started to fall, rates of divorce and separation increased, and age at marriage has risen. A rise in single living, cohabitation and prolonged residence in parental household, baby bust and increase in procreation within consensual unions are the main trends having become the outliers of new family formation patterns, often referred to as the manifestation of the so-called second demographic transition (Lesthaeghe, van de Kaa 1986).

In the end of the 20th century different cohorts behind the changes in family formation visible in period indicators might indicate towards returning to patterns in the beginning of the 20th century, however, as Sardon (1993) pointed out the historical conditions have been changed and new constellations shape new realities. There have occurred several shifts in return to so-called historical divergencies. Hajnal noted in particular the system of the joint family in the East, under which newly formed couples could live in their parents' home instead of having to establish a new and independent household of their own, which now predominantly describes Southern Europe where postponement of partnership (mainly marriage) has created households with adult children living with their parents longer. In Western Europe, and more so in Northern Europe, where nuclear family was a norm, unmarried cohabitation is prevailingly the solution to maintain one's independence in living apart from parents.

Several demographic trends are shaping the constellations related to partnership. With growing divorce rates one might assume that marital disruption is the ever-growing phenomena in contemporary Europe. Uhlenberg (1980) has shown that if the conditions of 1900 would prevail, 71% of marriages had been disrupted by death or divorce before their 40th anniversary, applying the conditions to the year 1976, only 60% of marriages would be disrupted by that date. However, in the latter conditions twice less the disruption occurred due to a death of a partner. With increasing gender gap in life expectancy, widowhood has become a phenomena mainly related to female population. Increasing dissolution rates make the phenomena much more prevalent across different age groups and might initiate a more frequent entry into new family forms or remarriage.

Figure 3.14. *Kin availability: partner. GGS countries*



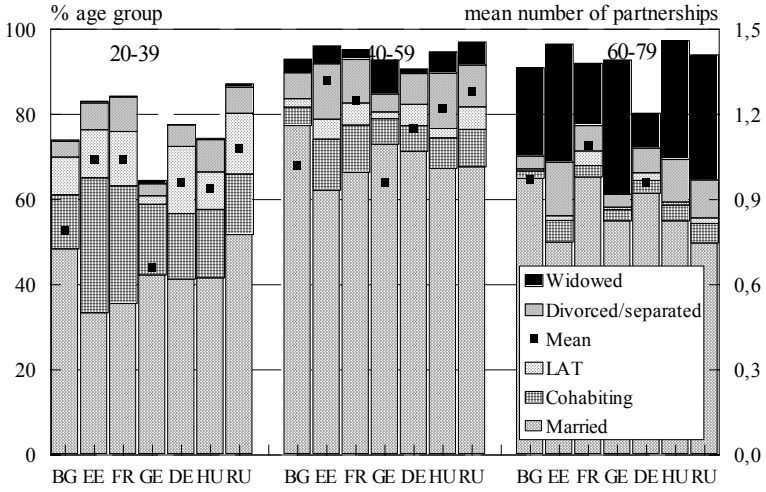
Source: GGS database

In our analysis we concentrate on the partnership status among the adults aged 20-79 in the sample of GGS countries. Having a partner is the prevalent situation for more than 70% of the population (Figure 3.14). Regarding the cross-country variation, partnering has less variation across countries than, for instance, having children available. The highest rates of having a partner[23] is found in France, Russia and Germany (75-78%), the lowest rates of partnering demonstrate Hungary and Georgia (67-69%). The

[23] GGS collected data on partners through marriage, cohabitation, but also for those living apart together (LAT). In the following figures LAT is included when dealing with all partnerships.

prevalence of those in partnership in Bulgaria and Estonia remains between the indicated values. In case only resident partners are considered (LAT excluded), the variance between countries becomes even less, remaining in the range between 64 and 70%. In regard to co-residing partners, the sequence of the countries changes, bringing forth adjacent to France with the highest prevalence also Bulgaria, followed by Russia. Estonia and Hungary are characterized with the smallest prevalence of co-resident partners (64-66%). Thus, the trends in family formation, despite the changes introduced since the 1960s, have to a lesser extent than fertility patterns shaped the current diversities in family ties across Europe.

Figure 3.15. *Kin availability: partner by aggregate age groups. GGS countries*



Source: GGS database

Following the partnership formation patterns within three age groups according to their partnership status- the youngest (20-39), middle-aged (40-59) and the elderly (60-79) - the timing and impact of different processes affecting family formation and shaping the total outcome become more evident across countries (Figure 3.15). In regard to the youngest age group, on average 72% of our sample population have either a resident or a non-resident partner. However, the variation between countries in respect to being in a partnership is one of the highest. The highest prevalence of those currently in partnership is in Russia (more than 80%), followed closely by Estonia and France (over 76%). The

lowest prevalence with almost 20 percentage points difference is demonstrated by Georgia (60,9%), followed by Hungary (66,5%).

The difference in timing of the new family formation patterns becomes more evident in the distribution of partnership status. In the youngest age group, Russia and Bulgaria demonstrate the highest prevalence of marriage, the proportion of married among those currently in partnership reaches almost 70% in Bulgaria and Georgia.[24] On the other extreme, among the population aged 20-39 in Estonia and France the married barely form one third of those ever-partnered. Even more clearly the new patterns of family formation are stressed in the proportion of those cohabiting: among those currently having a partner, cohabiting partners form over 40% in Estonia, followed by 36% in France. The lowest proportion of those cohabiting is found in Russia and Bulgaria, the difference between the former countries being more than twofold. Quite unexpectedly, Germany has the proportion of those cohabiting similar to the countries lying east of the Hajnal line, at the same time demonstrating the highest prevalence of those living apart together. Thus, it may be concluded that Germany together with Russia are in the forefront in the partnership ties with lesser stability. Georgia displays quite high cohabitation rates, but LAT is not a common feature of this society, reminding in this pattern more countries of Southern Europe, not currently represented in the analysis.

Regarding the other processes having impact on the current partnership status of the youngest age group, mortality has the least effect on partnership status. Only Russia and Georgia stand out with the higher widowhood rates (0,8%). On the other hand, dissolution is playing quite a role already in the youngest age group. Higher rates of those who have dissolved their partnerships characterize France and Hungary (7-9%), closely followed by Russia and Estonia and leaving behind Georgia and Bulgaria (3-4%) in this age group. Thus, taking into account all the different processes in family formation, the highest rates of ever-partnered in the youngest age group reach around 85% in Russia, France and Estonia, leaving Georgia at the other end with only 65% ever-partnered in the youngest age group.

[24] The prevalence of all partnership statuses is close to ever-partnered with the exception that in GGS the histories of LAT are not collected and LAT is asked only for the current partnership.

It has to be borne in mind, that the youngest age group is most affected by the timing effect: the later entry into partnerships brings more into the light different family formation patterns across countries. The later onset of the new family forms in a country also means for younger ages disproportionately higher marriage rates, in particularly as marriage is predominantly occurring then in a selectively younger ages than on average common in that country. The prevalence of new forms is also much more common among younger ages, reaching the middle age, people tend to change less stabile cohabitation or living apart together into marital status.

In the middle-aged group more than 80% live with a co-resident or a non-resident partner. Partnership prevalence rates are the highest in Bulgaria, France and Germany with around 83%, the lowest proportions with partners in the middle-aged group are found in Hungary and Estonia (76-79%). In the two latter countries, higher dissolution rates are mainly having the impact on the lower partnership rates, but mortality also plays its role in these countries. However, the highest rates of the widowed are found in Georgia (8%) and Russia (5,4%), the countries with long-term mortality stagnation and significant deterioration of health in the 1990s. Due to big gender gap in life expectancies in all four lastly mentioned countries, the widowhood mainly affects female population in them.

In the partnerships in the middle-aged group marriage is the prevailing status. Marriage comprises more than 90% of all partnerships in the middle-aged group in Bulgaria and Georgia, the lowest proportion of those married is found in Estonia (79%). Estonia and France remain among the forerunners as concerns the new family forms: cohabitation is the main form of partnership for almost 15% of those partnering in the middle-aged group in these countries. Living apart together is much more evenly spread across the countries in the middle-aged group (around 6%). Only Georgia, Bulgaria and Hungary display almost twofold lesser prevalence of LAT relations compared to other countries in the analysis.

The prevalence rates of ever-partnered show less variation across countries in the middle-aged group. All countries have among the middle-aged at least 90% of those who have ever-partnered (Germany with the lowest prevalence at 90,7 and Russia, Estonia and France with the highest prevalence between 95-97%).

In the oldest age group the partnership prevalence again decreases, mainly due to higher mortality in these ages. The highest partnership prevalence is found in France (71%), Bulgaria and Germany following with the rate of 66-67%. The lowest partnership rates demonstrate mainly these countries where higher mortality rates are combined with high dissolution rates like in Russia and Estonia (56%), but also Hungary (59%). Much higher proportions of the widowed in Georgia bring the current partnership rate at the level with the latter three mentioned countries.

Understandingly, marriage is the most common status among those elderly having currently a partner and the variation between countries is much less than in younger age groups, however, Bulgaria remains at the top and Estonia at the bottom in regard to this indicator. Aside Estonia, which has demonstrated through all age groups higher rates of cohabitation, among the elderly Russia features second highest rates. LAT relations are most frequent among the elderly in France and they even outweigh the rate of cohabitation among the French elderly.

The rates of ever-partnered demonstrate interesting variation among the elderly across countries. The highest rates of ever-partnered are found in Hungary and Estonia, reaching almost 97%, the other GGS countries in the analysis remain with their ever-partnered rates mostly between 91-94%. Very differently from the rest the ever-partnered rate in Germany barely reaches 80%, leaving almost one fifth of their elderly outside the partnering relations throughout their lifetime. That might be the main reason behind the previously shown high rates of childlessness in Germany. The answers to question on Germany's low partnership relations in this age group might be seeked in a polarized gender roles which left people only with options either to choose family or working life career (Blossfeld, Drobnič, Rohwer 2001).

In a more refined view on age-specific partnership rates, one could distinguish three main types of developments in the formation of partnership relations over a life course in contemporary Europe, based on the GGS sample countries (Table 2). One of the types refers to relatively early and universal entry into partnership ties, which mainly due to combined effect of dissolution and high mortality significantly reduces the prevalence in partnerships in older age groups. In our analysis such a type is most clearly represented by Russia.

Secondly, lower prevalence of partnerships in younger ages due to postponement of marriage and relatively lower spread of new family forms but gaining momentum towards older age groups is common to Southern Europe. In our analysis the type is best represented by Georgia, however, due to high mortality rates the universal partnership ties in older ages are not expressed to such an extent.

Thirdly, relatively high prevalence of partnership ties in younger ages, representing the entry into new forms of partnerships is carried well into later life at the high rates. In this case higher divorce rates are well compensated by lower mortality at older ages and allow to compensate with other forms of living together. In our analysis France is representing this type of development. This type allows an individual to be in a partnership the longest – over 45 years. The specific combination of later entry into partnerships in younger ages and high mortality in the older ages leaves Georgia with the lowest years spent in partnerships across the countries analyzed. Thus, increase in life expectancy and spread of new family forms are the main compensatory factors for cushioning the impact of divorce and lesser prevalence of marriage. These factors are the main driving force for increased years lived in partnership.

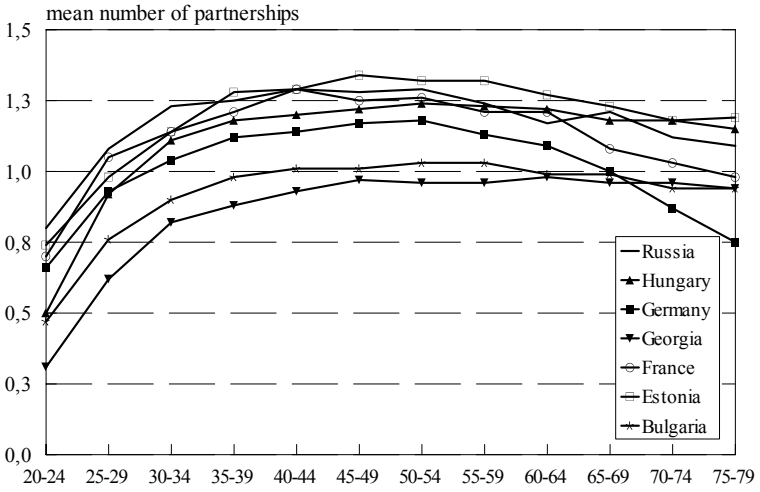
On average more than 40 years of partnership does not mean that people live in the same partnership over these 40 years. The number of partnerships is affected mainly by the increasing spread of divorce/dissolution, but also by the spread of new family forms. Figure 3.16 presents the mean number of partnerships by five-year age groups. Prevailing type of relatively early entry into the partnerships and high divorce rates in Russia are the main factors for this country's higher mean number of partnerships in younger ages, followed by Estonia and France. Early onset of cohabitation and higher spread of new family forms in Estonia distinguishes its higher mean numbers of partnerships across the middle-aged groups ranging around 1.3 partnerships, followed by France and Russia. In Estonia, for age groups 35-64 almost every fourth is engaged in re-partnering.

Table 2. *Age-specific partnership rates and total years lived in partnership, GGS countries*

	Bulgaria	Estonia	France	Georgia	Germany	Hungary	Russia
20-24	44,1	62,2	57,5	29,4	54,8	40,7	66,6
25-29	68,4	75,9	78,9	58,9	72,1	67	82,8
30-34	80,2	81,1	81,9	75,2	78	76,4	87,5
35-39	83,6	85,5	83,5	79,3	80,7	79,1	86,4
40-44	84,8	81,4	81,7	82,3	83,4	77,6	85,6
45-49	82,7	83	83,4	83,4	82,6	76,3	84,7
50-54	82,6	76,4	83,6	79,8	83	77,8	78,9
55-59	83,7	74,3	81,8	75,1	80,2	74,9	75,4
60-64	75,7	65,7	80,7	70,2	76,8	69,6	64
65-69	69,7	61,2	75,6	64,4	72,3	61,9	59,3
70-74	60,2	51,7	68,1	54,2	59,1	55,1	51,4
75-79	57,9	41,2	54,2	40,7	45,5	40,5	40,9
Years in partnership	**43,7**	**42,0**	**45,6**	**39,7**	**43,4**	**39,9**	**43,2**

In earlier research it has been indicated that usually in those countries where there are low proportions of married, with the spread of cohabitation the partnerships are balanced with the latter (Trost 1998). This becomes evident when we analyse total number of marriages, not presented in a figure separately. We will find Russia with highest number of marriages up to the age 50-54. Until the age group 30-34 Estonia and France represent the lowest mean numbers of those married. Analysis of data from Family and Fertility Surveys in the 1990s has outlined the increased spread of new family forms in Estonia for younger cohorts, development along the same patterns as in Northern Europe (Katus, Puur, Sakkeus 2008).

Figure 3.16. *Total number of partnerships by 5-year age groups. GGS countries*



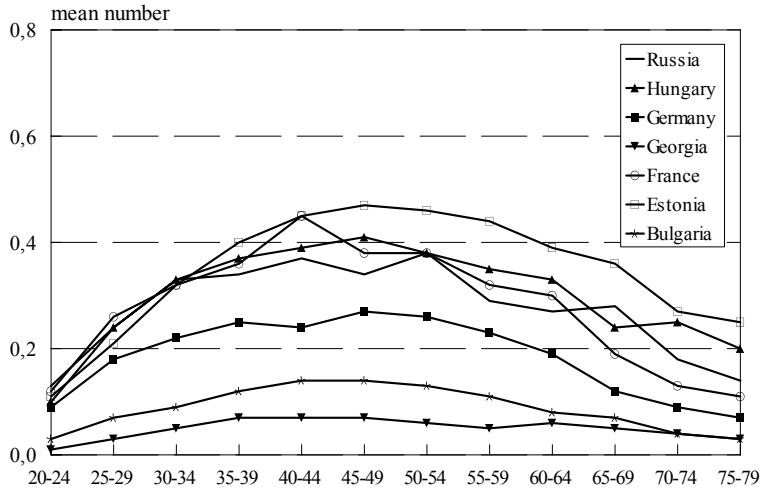
Source: GGS database

On the other hand, the lowest numbers of partnerships over the age groups are demonstrated by Georgia and Bulgaria (Figure 3.16). As it was mentioned above, these countries were also characterized by lowest proportions of new family forms accounting for the total number of partnerships. Interestingly, these two countries remind Southern Europe were cohabitation is rare and delayed marriage, more common in younger ages, is not balanced by cohabitation. In the oldest two age groups, the smallest number of partnerships is found in Germany. Despite France remains by this indicator somewhat higher than Bulgaria and Georgia, in the last two age groups there is a significant reduction in the number of partnerships also for French population. For older cohorts in Western Europe, represented by Germany and France, repartnering has been much less common than for Estonia, Russia or Hungary, thus the latter have also maintained higher mean numbers of partnerships due to repartnering after dissolution or widowhood in older age groups.

Recent research has found that cohabitation primarily affects the timing of marriage and has less impact on the number of people who eventually marry (Kalmijn 2007), thus the effects of lower prevalence of partnerships in the beginning of one's life course is a different phenomena than in the end. In this respect variations between countries in age-specific partnership rates reflect their different stages towards new family formation patterns. Also in relation to higher divorce rates Kalmijn puts forward

the anomie hypothesis which in East European countries undermines marriage (p.260). Another feature of relatively high rates of repartnering in East Europe has been earlier to Western Europe democratization of legal frameworks for divorce and persistent earlier entry into partnerships. Mainly these underlying trends are behind the age differentials across countries as concerns the number of break-ups of the unions (Figure 3.17).

Figure 3.17. *Total number of union-break-ups by 5-year age groups. GGS countries*



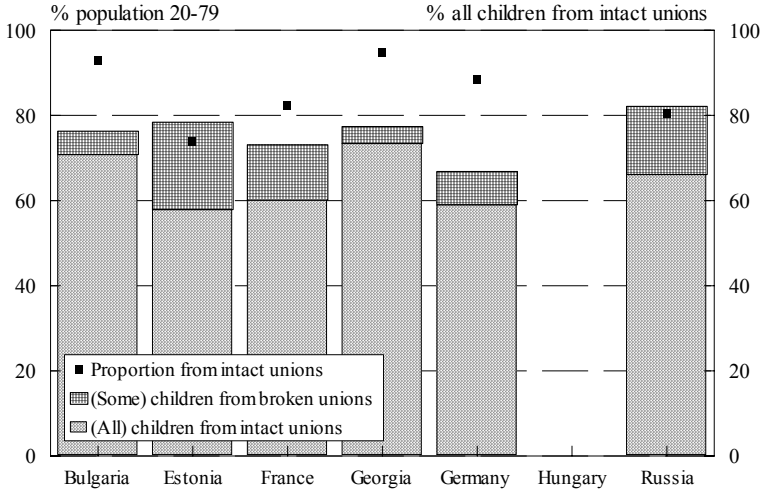
Source: GGS database

In the youngest age groups, France, Estonia, Russia and Hungary are described by similarly the highest number of break-ups. From the age group 30-34 onwards, Estonia takes the lead –in each age group until 60-64 there are at least 0.4 break-ups per adult, i.e. practically every third partnership in these age groups has ended in a disruption. The number of break-ups diminishes with age, however, for Estonia even in the oldest age group it remains at the high number of 0.25 break-ups per adult in this age range. Hungary and France, to a lesser extent Russia follow closely Estonia in this pattern until the aged 60-64. In the older ages only Hungary remains alongside with Estonia with relatively high numbers of broken unions, Russia and France demonstrate lowering rates of union disruption towards the oldest age groups and the countries change their sequence by this indicator.

Such diverse trends also bring about the diversity of family ties with much broader set of kin relationships, step-kin entering into the picture and multiple households

on which GGS type of information enables further in-depth exploration. In order to illustrate to which extent the diversity of family ties has grown for the population under consideration in the following we present the proportion of children growing up in intact or broken unions (Figure 3.18). The indicator has been constructed for the prevalence of children in the population aged 20-79. In case all children of the respondent grew up in an intact union they comprise the prevalence for children in intact unions, in case at least one of the respondents' children was from a broken union, they form the prevalence of children from disrupted unions.

Figure 3.18. *Number of respondent's children from intact and broken unions. GGS countries*



Source: GGS database

In regard to prevalence of all children from intact unions Estonia, Germany and France stand apart from all the other countries with the lowest values of around 60% among population aged 20-79. In Georgia and Bulgaria, the prevalence of children from intact unions reaches over 70%. The lowest proportion of the indicator in Estonia makes the diversity of kinship ties the highest among the countries. By this indicator, Russia and France follow Estonia, whereas in Germany, Georgia and Bulgaria such phenomena are less frequent.

In the future in-depth analysis Estonia would offer an interesting site for research how the families have coped with such a diversity of family ties. From the GGS data it

becomes also evident that Estonia alongside with France and Germany also features the lowest proportions of resident children across the age groups, in particular manifested among the elderly. The demographic changes in marriage, divorce, remarriage, cohabitation, shared custody and related processes have significantly altered the structure of the life-course. Increasing variety of family ties through ex-spouses, stepchildren, in-laws, half-siblings and others brings about a greater diversity of formal kinship ties. All in all it has created much more heterogeneity in life experience. Even more so, the diversity has become also greater across countries in Europe. Several studies have shown that marital disruption has notable effects in particular in one's later life bringing about weaker ties with children, where divorced men have been found to be most vulnerable (Cooney, Uhlenberg 1990; Pezzin, Schone 1999). Also remarried mothers and children display reduced time exchange in their relationship as well as cash transfers (Pezzin, Schone 1999). Although kin ties of broken and reformed families might be regarded as problematic, they also hold out opportunities of adaptive transformations which can be explored better on the basis of the data becoming available across countries in the framework of Gender and Generation Programme.

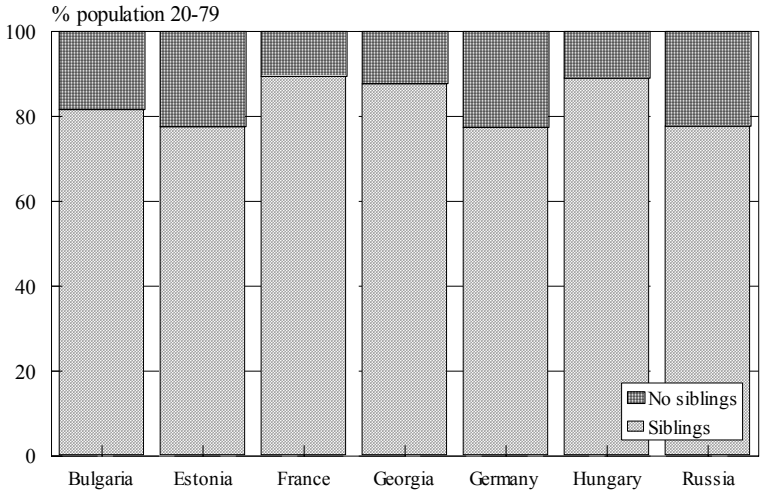
3.2.7 Siblings

Among close kin, siblings represent a continuity in the family history that is uncommon in most other family relationships. As noted by Cicirelli (1988) sibling relationships have a longer course than most other human relationships, beginning at birth of the younger child at the family of origin and continuing (for most) through all stages of the life course. In contrast, spouse relationships begin in adulthood with individuals who seldom share a common childhood history. Similarly, the parent-child relationship is not as long-term as sibling ties, because it is usually terminated by the death of a parent. Because of the prevailingly egalitarian nature of the relationship, common genetic heritage, cultural milieu and shared early experiences, siblings tend to retain the sense of family unity and affection for one another beyond childhood and adolescence (e.g. Gold 1990). In the contents of family support, siblings do not tend to play a major care giving role in the lives of most adults. However, after midlife, the role of siblings may grow in importance

for those who have no other core family members available (Miner and Uhlenberg 1997). But more importantly, in mid-life, siblings constitute an essential resource in sharing the care for their ageing parents (Checkovich and Stern 2002).

The duration of sibling relationships underlies the high prevalence of sibling ties observed in the GGS (Figure 3.19). Judging from our sample countries, on average more than four fifths of adults aged 20-79 have one or more siblings. Consistent with the drift above, having siblings appears more common than having a partner or children, not to mention the parents. Regarding the cross-country variation, the lowest prevalence of sibling ties (77-78%) is found in Estonia, Germany and the Russian Federation. On the other hand, a noticeably higher availability of kin ties is characteristic of France, Georgia and Hungary where nearly nine tenth (88-89%) of adults are engaged in a sibling role. Finally, Bulgaria is placed between these two groups.

Figure 3.19. *Kin availability: siblings. GGS countries*



Source: GGS database

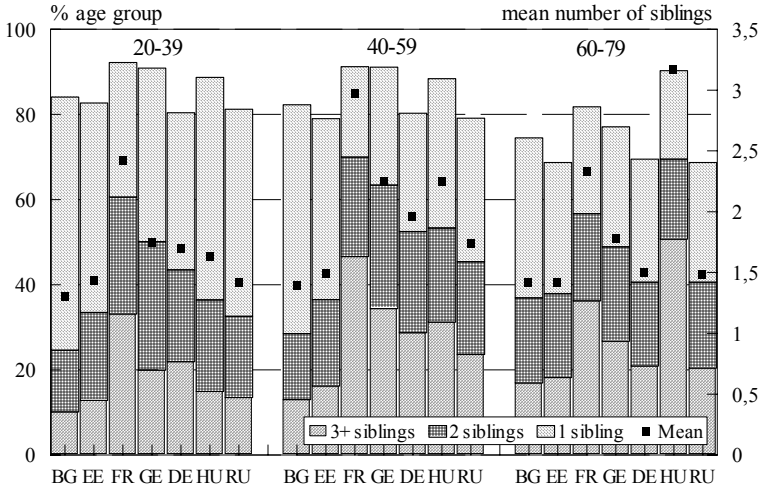
From the demographic point of view, the formation and dissolution of sibling ties is influenced by both major processes that shape the family constellations of the population. Fertility patterns, though not of the anchor's own but of the parental generation underlie the initial sibling configuration which encompasses the sibship size, child spacing (time intervals separating the birth of siblings), and the relative number of boys and girls in the sibling group. Sociological research has demonstrated that

independent of other components of family structure, the sibling configuration has lasting implications on individuals (e.g. Blau and Duncan 1967; Heer 1985; Steelmann *et al* 2002). Although ties between siblings tend to outlast other relationships in the family of origin, they are exposed to a cumulative influence of mortality from inception. With the extension of life expectancy, in contemporary populations, the effects of mortality have become increasingly concentrated in the later stages of the life course.

Unlike ascending or descending family relationships, leaving aside the extreme old age not covered by the GGS, the availability of siblings undergoes no dramatic, unidirectional shifts over the life course. This notion is exemplified by Figure 3.20, which depicts the availability of siblings among young, middle-aged and older population. The comparison of young adults and the middle-aged reveals only a minor variation in the prevalence of sibling ties, with a difference exceeding 3-4% in none of the countries. Regarding the parity distribution and size of sibling group, differences are more pronounced: in most countries the middle-aged generations display a higher number of siblings than the younger ones.[25] As mortality "works" in the opposite direction, the observed difference wholly relates to the past fertility levels during respective historical periods. The middle-aged generation was born between 1945-1964, which largely coincides with the period of the post-war baby-boom, at least for the countries that had completed fertility transition and reached low fertility already in before the Second World War. Following the mid-1960s, fertility shifted to lower levels, moderately or strongly below replacement, which resulted in a somewhat smaller sibship size. The absence (or weakness) of such an effect in the case of Bulgaria and Estonia stems from the fairly low fertility levels already in the early postwar decades (Frejka and Sardon 2004).

[25] It should be noted that the parity distribution of siblings is not directly comparable with the parity distribution of the underlying parental generations. Reported from the position of the anchor, it does not consider childlessness among the parental generation and overstates the prevalence of larger families. However, reflecting the family context of the anchor, the applied perspective is appropriate.

Figure 3.20. *Kin availability: siblings by aggregate age groups. GGS countries*



Source: GGS database

In the older age group, mortality accounts for the reduced likelihood of having brothers and/or sisters around.[26] In general, the chances of having at least one sibling among the elderly are about 10 percentage points lower than for the middle-aged. Among 60-79 year olds, the proportion of respondents with sibling(s) alive ranges from 69-70% in Estonia, Germany and the Russian Federation to 82% in France. Disregarding mortality, the proportion of respondents with siblings ever-born (not reported in Figure 3.17) amounts to 87-93% in most countries. A somewhat lower level is characteristic only of Germany (21% of 60-79-year olds with no siblings ever-born), reflecting one of the world's lowest fertility levels in the late 1920s-early 1930s, and the years of the Second World War (Chesnais 1992).

The comparison of the proportions with surviving and ever-born siblings yields a direct estimate of the reduction in the availability of siblings, caused by mortality. In the age group 60-79, the reduction in the proportion of having at least one brother or sister ranges from 9-10% in France and Germany to 19% in the Russian Federation and Estonia. To this end it must be noted that given the relatively high average number of siblings born in the older generations, the referred percentages tend to downplay the experience of losing a sibling in these generations. In the countries with higher mortality,

[26] The data for Hungary is not presented because, evidently, it represents siblings ever-born rather than siblings alive at the time of survey. The discrepancy between the two measures becomes particularly evident in the older age group, which renders the result not comparable to other countries.

an average person aged 60-79 has lost 1.4-1.5 brothers and/or sisters, in relative terms the losses amount to roughly a half of the initial number. In the countries with lower mortality, the corresponding proportion is slightly under 30%.

Regarding the future, the fertility trends over the second half of the 20th century imply a prospective reduction of the average number of siblings, and hence the horizontal "width" of the kin network. Evidently, the change will also touch upon other aspects of sibling configuration, for instance, the age difference between brothers and sisters. Although the secular trend towards improved longevity exert a certain counterbalancing influence, it will hardly override the consequences of the shift towards low or very low fertility. To an important extent, the timing of the latter determines country-specific trajectories in the availability of siblings.

3.3 Family constellation: towards a synthetic view

The previous sections presented the evidence pertaining to different family relations separately. A similar approach prevails in contemporary social science as researchers tend to view partnerships, parent-child relationships, and ties to other kin members in isolation, rather than as being embedded in an intergenerational structure. Although this approach informs about the details of specific relationships between kin members, it falls short to provide a comprehensive account of the family constellation that surrounds the reference individual. Addressing the latter contributes considerably to an understanding of the way family roles are enacted, in terms of kin resources and support available to them as well as commitments and responsibilities they have.

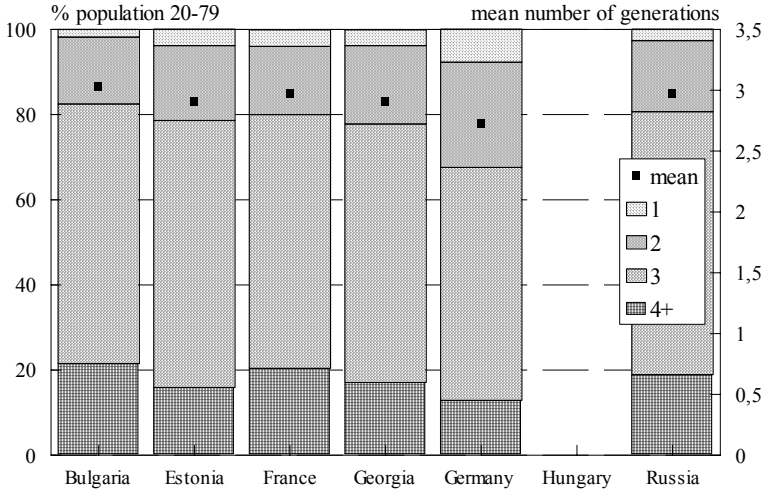
From a methodological point of view, obtaining a synthetic account of the family constellation calls for measures that would summarize the variation over the entire range of ascending and descending family ties. A convenient way towards such generalization is provided by the number of family generations in the individual's kin network. As noted earlier in the report, with the marked extension of life expectancy, members of more generations are alive at the same time and share a greater part of each other's life spans (e.g. Treas and Bengtson 1982; Watkins, Menken and Bongaarts 1987). This has created a rise in the prevalence of multigenerational ties, connecting grandchildren and grandparents, and even more distant family generations.

Fertility trends have implied a shift towards a smaller number of offspring, and although this development has been partly offset by increased survival, the average number of children appears currently much smaller than it used to be at earlier stages of demographic development. Along the horizontal axis, the decline in fertility has decreased the previously extensive lateral kinship ties. The combined effect of reduced mortality and fertility has been pinpointed in the "verticalization" of family structures. This concept refers to the fact that over time the age structure of families has evolved from a pyramid to what has been labeled as "beanpole" (Bengtson, Rosenthal and Burton 1995; Bengtson 2001), a family structure in which the shape is long and thin, with more family generations alive but fewer members living in each generation. Against that backdrop, the number of family generations offers an appropriate measure to judge how far different countries have progressed in this major transformation of family relationships. However, the shift towards a more verticalized family tree is not self-evident since the concurrent changes in other demographic processes, above all childbearing, may to a noticeable extent counteract to the former development.

Figure 3.21 shows the number of family generations above and below the reference individual. As the data reveal, families consisting of three generations appear to be the most common in the countries included in the analysis.[27] On average, three fifths of the respondents are embedded in that type of generational structure. The variation in prevalence of three-generation families is relatively small. In most countries, it ranges slightly above 60% (from 60% in France to 63% in Estonia). Only Germany features a somewhat lower prevalence of three-generation families with 55%.

[27] The data is not available for Hungary since the national GGS in that country did not collect information on grandparents.

Figure 3.21. *Number of family generations. GGS countries*



Source: GGS database

A strong majority of the remainder of the respondents can be found in two- and four-generation families that make up an almost equal share among the population aged 20-79. On average, two-generation families account for 18.2% and four+ generation families make up 17.6% of the GGS respondents. The proportion of respondents living in five-generation families appears marginal and hence we decided not to present it separately but include among the four+ generation category.[28] The ratio between the families with a more complex and simpler vertical structure seems to follow a different pattern across countries. In Bulgaria, France and the Russian Federation, four-generation families outnumber two-generation families. On the other hand, in Estonia, Georgia and Germany, the opposite appears to be the case. On the extremes, in Bulgaria the prevalence of four-generation families exceeds that of the two-generation families by more than a third while in Germany the latter is nearly twice as common as the former.

In contemporary Europe, the least common family constellation is the one-generation family. On average, 4% of the respondents are so-called solo individuals (Hagestad 2000), i.e. they have neither ascending nor descending kin. Solos are deprived

[28] In the GGS, families with five generation occur among a small number of respondents in their middle age or young old-age who have three descending generations (children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren) and parent(s) still alive. The overall percentage of such families does not exceed in no country 0.5%. In a sample of with a wider age range (including children and the very old), the proportion of five-generation families would probably be higher (Pennec 1997; Van Imhoff and Post 1998).

of intergenerational family ties but at the same time they are not necessarily family-less: an overwhelming majority of them has one or more siblings, and/or a partner. The prevalence of one-generation families is highest in Germany where it amounts to 7.8% of the population aged 20-79. In the latter group, one in five (1.5%) is deprived of family ties also along the horizontal axis, having neither siblings nor partners. In Estonia, France and Georgia, the likelihood of being a solo individual is about twice as low as in Germany (3.7%-3.9%). Being deprived of any vertical family ties is even less common in the Russian Federation (2.7%) or in Bulgaria (1.8%). Closely similar overall proportions are also reported in the Netherlands by Dykstra and Komter (2006).

To sum up the above findings from the viewpoint of the verticalization of family constellation, Figure 3.21 also reports the mean number of generations in the family. Despite the variation in the prevalence of different family types, the summary measure varies in a rather narrow range between 2.9 and 3.0 for most of the countries. The single outlier is Germany, where the family constellations of the adults aged 20-79 include 2.7 generations on average. In a broader framework, this draws attention to the fact that on the given level of generalization, divergent demographic regimes can produce strikingly similar outcomes in terms of the vertical "depth" of the family constellation.

Among the countries included in the present analysis, this fact is perhaps best exemplified by the comparison of France and the Russian Federation. Leaving aside highly contrasting demographic history with the onset of demographic transition nearly an entire century apart (Chesnais 1992), since the turn of the 1990s, these countries represent the extremes of demographic regimes that co-exist in Europe. In Russia, the prolonged mortality stagnation commenced in the 1960s and was followed by an acute health crisis accompanying the societal transition (Vallin, Meslé and Vallin 2001; Vallin 2005). Male life expectancy fell to 58-59 years and stayed on that level until recently, when the mortality statistics in Russia started to show slight improvements.[29] In France, life expectancy has been more or less constantly improving and ranks close to the top for both men (77.3 in 2006) and women (84.4 years). In terms of fertility, the differences are no smaller. France has featured one of the highest fertility levels in Europe, relatively

[29] In 2007, life expectancy at birth stood at 61.4 years for males and 73.9 years for females (Goskomstat 2009). For males, the expectation of life falls behind the levels reported in the 1960s.

close to replacement level (period TFR 1.8-1.9). In the Russian Federation, since the mid-1990s the period fertility rates have been down at the level 1.2-1.3, termed lowest low according to the contemporary standards. Although low fertility is partly accounted to the ongoing postponement of childbearing, the estimates of completed cohort fertility do not exceed 1.6 in the generations born during the 1970s (Zakharov 2008).

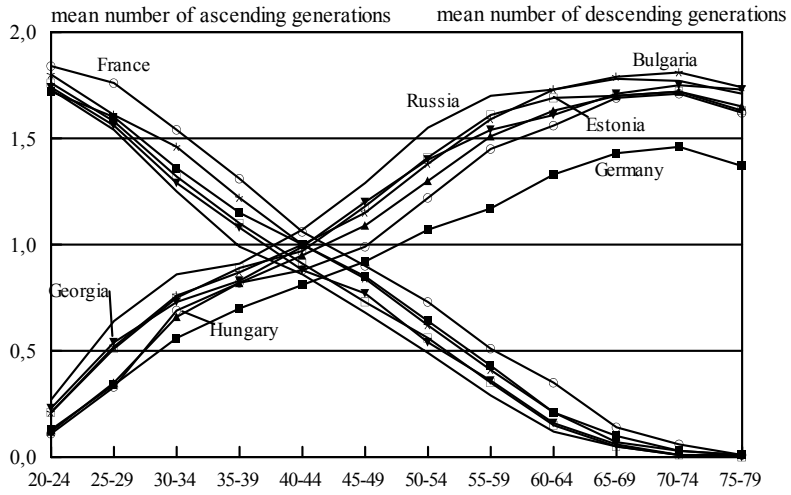
In spite of these pronounced contrasts in underlying demographic processes, both countries feature a similar family constellation with regard to the number of generations. The differences in the prevalence of specific family types do not exceed 1-2 percentage points; the average number of family generations in the two countries matches with a two-digit accuracy (2.97 generations in both countries). By making the distinction between the number of family generations above and below the anchor, Figure 3.22 reveals the mechanism by which the observed match is achieved. The figure shows that one difference in the number of ascending generations (parents and grandparents) is exactly canceled out by an opposite difference in the number of descending generations (children and grandchildren). The complete annihilation of differences noted above is of course a matter of coincidence, but by the same token, it draws attention to the complementarity of underlying demographic processes.

In other words, the verticalization of the family may be driven by two independent developments. On one hand, the rise in the vertical spread of the intergenerational relations derives from the advances in longevity that tend to extend the shared survival of generations, primarily with generations above the respondent. At the same time, the results above show that the potential for the shared survival of generations is also affected by the distance between successive generations. Shorter generational distance, set by early childbearing, also implies an increased overlap between the family generations and a greater potential for intergenerational ties.

From the conceptual point of view, the highest prevalence between multigenerational ties is achieved under the demographic regime combining advanced longevity with yet early and universal childbearing. However, the account of modern demographic history quite clearly testifies that such a combination has seldom occurred in the industrialised world. To put the findings above into a more dynamic perspective, it seems worthwhile to try to relate them to major shifts in underlying demographic

processes in Europe since the Second World War. In particular, this would allow to extend our view somewhat beyond the evidence derived from the GGS snapshot.

Figure 3.22. *Number of ascending and descending family generations. GGS countries*



Source: GGS database

In post-war Europe, during the baby-boom period, until the mid-1960s, mortality and fertility made a mutually reinforcing contribution to the vertical extension of family ties. In the countries west of the Hajnal line[30], that period featured a marked shift in the timing of childbearing towards younger ages, and hence, a shorter generational distance between children and adults. Similarly, the continuing rise in life expectancy increased the potential for the joint survival of generations, thus adding and contributing to the vertical "depth" of the family constellation. The areas east of the Hajnal line also witnessed a rise in life expectancy and a decline in the age at childbearing, although it was primarily driven by the reduction of births of higher parities rather than the shifts in the timing of childbearing (Frejka and Sardon 2004). As a result, until the late 1960s in all parts of Europe, the developments in underlying demographic processes favored the shift towards a growing prevalence of multigenerational ties and a growing complexity of the family constellation. Judging from mortality and fertility patterns, it seems reasonable

[30] Hajnal line represents a historical divide that demarcates the spread of west European marriage pattern, characterised by high age at marriage (particularly for females) and a high proportion of individuals who would never marry (Hajnal 1965). The west European marriage pattern emerged in the 17-18. century and ceased to exist in the aftermath of the Second World War. Among the countries included in the analysis the west European marriage pattern was characteristic of Estonia, France, Germany and partly Hungary.

to assume that the convergence of family constellations across the countries and regions of Europe strengthened until the turn of the 1970s.[31]

In the following decades, the patterns in the underlying demographic processes started to diverge again. West of the Iron Curtain, the demographic development became increasingly shaped by a transformation in fertility and nuptiality that first began in Scandinavia during the mid-1960s. In the early 1970s, this spread to the countries of western Europe and somewhat later to southern Europe. The transformation involved interlinked changes in several processes, particularly in childbearing, union formation and dissolution, and living arrangements. The break with the preceding patterns appeared so radical that in the late 1980s these changes, along with related shifts in values and attitudes, were generalized into a concept of the second demographic transition (Lesthaeghe and van de Kaa 1986; van de Kaa 1987). Among these multiple changes, the switch from rejuvenation to the postponement of childbearing exerted a salient influence on the family constellation. In particular, the shift towards later childbearing started to counteract the effect of a continuous rise in life expectancy, concentrating among older age groups and in the later stages of the life course. However, comparing the change in the modal age of childbearing and in life expectancy, it seems that the postponement of childbearing has not completely offset the concurrent vertical extension of the family constellation from the top.[32]

In most of Eastern Europe, the shift towards earlier childbearing and shorter generational distance did not cease until the "meltdown" of the Iron Curtain and the onset of radical societal change. From the late 1980s, the scale of divergence led scholars to conceptualize the situation as the appearance of a new East-West divide in fertility and family behavior (e.g. Monnier and Rychtarchikova 1992; Ni Brolchain 1993; Roussel 1994). Apart from the historical delineation introduced by John Hajnal (1965), the new

[31] The prevailing development towards convergence, of course, does not exclude significant country-specific features. A sizeable part of the latter relates to the variation in the scale of population losses sustained during the two world wars as well the demographic legacy of totalitarian regimes.

[32] On average, in 1970-2005 the life expectancy at birth (both sexes combined) in western Europe increased by 7.2 years which clearly exceeds the rise in the mean age of childbearing (3-4 years) over the same period (Council of Europe 2006; UN 2009)

cleavage tended to follow the state socialist regimes from the rest of Europe.[33] Similarly, in the 1970s and 1980s the dissimilarities strengthened with regard to mortality patterns as the rise in longevity ceased in the countries of the Eastern bloc. Overall, the combination of the continued shift towards earlier family formation and stagnation of life expectancy possibly implied an additional increase in the prevalence of multigenerational bonds in the region. In other words, it seems plausible that all over Europe the underlying demographic trends favored a further verticalization of family constellations, though probably the shifts were slower than during the earlier period. However, the driving forces behind this change seem to have been divergent across regions: in Western Europe[34] the developments were driven primarily by the shifts in longevity while in Eastern Europe the compression of childbearing played a central role.

Since 1990 the profound transformation in the demography of Eastern Europe has significantly reduced the previous contrasts, especially in family formation and fertility. In the context of the present study, probably the most salient among these changes relates to the onset of the "postponement transition" (or its marked acceleration in the case of a few countries). Like elsewhere in Europe, the shift towards later childbearing has begun to reduce the overlap between generations from the bottom. But as noted in earlier sections, various countries have made highly dissimilar progress along this road: at the time of the GGS data collection, the mean age of women at first birth ranged from 23.3-23.5 years in Moldova and Ukraine to 27.7 years in Slovenia (Council of Europe 2006; Eurostat 2009).

No less striking differences can be observed in the recent mortality trends in the region. The former socialist countries in the central part of the continent witnessed none or relatively minor setbacks and the life expectancy has been rising rapidly since the early or mid-1990s. As a result, in several countries (e.g. the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovenia), life expectancy at birth has passed 70 years for males and 80 years for females. On the extreme, in several successor states of the former USSR (Belarus, Moldova, the

[33] This generalisation does not apply to union dissolution as the divorce rates in the countries of Eastern Europe appeared frequently at the same level of even higher than among the forerunners of the second demographic transition (Council of Europe 2006).

[34] Western Europe is here referred as an entity encompassing the countries that did not experience the state socialist regimes in the postwar decades. In the demographic discourse, a more subtle distinction between Northern, Southern and Western Europe (in more restricted sense) is more appropriate; among others, the mentioned delineation is applied in the second part of the report.

Russian Federation and Ukraine), following a sharp decline in the 1990s, life expectancy is still clearly below 65 years for men and 75 years for women. Obviously, the reported variation in the underlying demographic processes likely contributes to a growing diversity of family constellations in the region.

As exemplified by the above comparison of France and the Russian Federation, the diversity is not necessarily discernible in the count of family generations or other general measures. This can be revealed at a finer level of disaggregation and measures which profile the ties connecting individuals at various stages of the life course to their kin. As we have seen earlier in this section, diversity in family constellations relates to the balance between the ties to ascending and descending kin, but similarly, it relates to the times when family constellations are in flux, i.e. the pivotal age at which certain relationships are generated (e.g. birth of children and grandchildren) or lost (the death of parents and grandparents). Furthermore, the shifts in the generational position of the individual can be viewed in the context of transitions in other major life domains (education, work, retirement, health etc). Although having important consequences for the individuals involved, addressing the interplay between domains of life would take us far beyond the aims of the present analysis.

The account of family constellations obtained from the GGS and analyzed in this report represents a consolidated outcome of the past trends in fertility, mortality and nuptiality that stretch back over the lifetime of family generations covered by the survey. Put in another way, the patterns portrayed in the report carry an imprint of a considerable variety of demographic regimes that have existed in various parts of Europe during the second half of the 20th century. In the prospective view this implies that family constellations observed within as well as across countries, are not fixed but subject to further transformation. Leaving aside the growing importance of step- and half ties resulting from the ongoing rise in the break-up of unions and repartnering, the course of other changes should not be taken for granted.

The rise in life expectancy continues to extend the shared survival of generations, and regarding the adjacent generations (parents and children), its influence is evidently stronger than the counterbalancing effect of the postponement of childbearing. In respect to multigenerational ties in which the effects of postponement come together across three

(grandparents and grandchildren) or four generations (great-grandparents and great-grand children), the outcome may not be self-evident. It seems reasonable to ask whether a straight-line verticalization of family ties is to continue independent of plausible demographic scenarios and regimes. The results of this analysis provide an indication that the answer may not be strictly affirmative. In particular, this assertion relates to Germany where the number of co-existing family generations was found to be noticeably lower than in other countries included in the analysis. The distinction between ascending and descending family generations revealed that the observed outlier position of the country stems from the very low fertility and a high level of childlessness that has prevailed in the country since the mid-1970s. Although Germany ranks relatively high in terms of life expectancy, longevity has fallen short to counterbalance the influence of persistent low fertility.[35] In a broader context, this underscores the possibility that under certain demographic circumstances, the secular trends towards vertical extension of the family constellation may come to a halt or even reverse temporarily.

Given the fertility in Europe — portrayed as "diverse, delayed and below replacement" in a recent comprehensive account by Frejka and Sobotka (2008), it seems quite plausible that in the future, several countries may gravitate towards the pattern of family constellations exhibited by Germany. Above all, this pertains to other German-speaking nations as well as many countries in southern and eastern Europe (incl Bulgaria and the Russian Federation analyzed in the present report). In these countries, the recent estimates reveal completed fertility of cohorts born in the early 1970s at the levels between 1.45 and 1.65 (Eurostat 2009). Corroborating the latter findings, the evidence pertaining to childbearing intentions suggests that in many of the countries concerned, young women are increasingly preferring sub-replacement fertility size (Goldstein, Lutz and Testa 2003; Testa 2007). If the observed cross-country differentials in fertility are to prevail for decades to come, this may lead to a considerable alteration of family constellations in the future.

[35] In Germany, life expectancy at birth amounts to 77.4 years for men and 82.7 years for women (Eurostat 2009).

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