



FAMILYPLATFORM

How to make the lives of Europe's families better

Family life in Europe is changing. However, how exactly is it changing? What difficulties do families encounter; what do they enjoy? How could policy makers help them? These are some of the questions that the project FAMILYPLATFORM addressed: The project collected answers and, even more important, identified where more research is needed.

The first task of FAMILYPLATFORM was to collect "all" current knowledge on family life and family policies in today's Europe: Research results and the knowledge of over 130 stakeholders, who were involved throughout the project. In close collaboration with these stakeholders, FAMILYPLATFORM identified knowledge gaps, anticipated future challenges for families in Europe and, finally, proposed a Research Agenda on Family Wellbeing for Europe.



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IMPACT

The main outcome of the project FAMILYPLATFORM is a research agenda that forms the basis for a call by the European Commission for a large-scale integrated project on "families in transition". The call says that proposers are "advised to take note of this preparatory work when drafting their proposals".

The project involved not only over 50 academic experts but over 130 other stakeholders. These stakeholders represented international and European level organizations (e.g. European Commission and Parliament, OECD, ILO, UNICEF), EU state ministries, 19 international and European-level civil society organizations, 30 national grassroots organizations, and researchers from 23 European Member States, plus Switzerland, Norway, the USA and Canada.

Through this involvement of stakeholders, by taking stock of existing knowledge on families and by formulating a research agenda on families and family wellbeing in Europe, the project has provided not only the basis for the above-mentioned large-scale research project, but also, as the project members hope, leverage to influence national research agendas.



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Easing the “rush-hours of life”

One among several important challenges that the project found will probably not come as a surprise to most families: Reconciliation of family life with other demands, such as care or work responsibilities. This can be particularly difficult in what the researchers call “the rush-hours of life”:

Young people stay in education for long periods, so that the time for starting a career and having children often coincide. This makes it difficult to manage the many demands that young families face, prompting some young people to have fewer children – or none at all. The researchers and the stakeholders involved argue that more information is needed on how to best help young people to manage such “rush hours of life”, so that they can freely choose to have the size of family they want.

Where more research is needed

Having taken into account existing research and the concerns of the stakeholders involved, the researchers argue that more research is needed in the following areas in order to help policy makers to support families:

- Care, e.g. financial support for family or external care;
- Life course and transitions, e.g. how to make the transition to parenthood easier;
- Everyday family management and the empowerment of families, e.g. how to help men and women to equally participate in and cope with family life;
- Spatial mobility, e.g. how schooling, housing and employment can take into account increased work-related demands on mobility;
- Inequalities and insecurities, e.g. how to combat poverty in families;
- Family policies, e.g. assess the impact of all new policies on families.

This research agenda was the basis for the European Commission’s 2012 call for a large-scale collaborative research project on “Families in Transition” (see ‘IMPACT’).

FACTS & FIGURES

Project Name	FAMILYPLATFORM - Social platform on research for families and family policies
Website	www.familyplatform.eu archived on: web.archive.org
Coordinating Institution	Technische Universität Dortmund
Number of Partners	12
Start Date – End Date	1.10.2009 – 31.3.2011
Duration	18 months
Project Funding	1.398.827 €
Funding scheme	Coordination and support action (Support action)
Activity - FP7	Major trends in society and their implications - Activity 3
Read more	Book “Wellbeing of Families in Future Europe – Challenges for Research and Policy” and “Research Agenda on Families and Family Wellbeing for Europe” and other publications: https://eldorado.tu-dortmund.de/handle/2003/27684 Policy brief “Family wellbeing – A challenge for policy and research” (2011): http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/familyplatform-policy-brief-june-2011_en.pdf



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