

## International Workshop

# Family Policies and Gender Equality in Central and Eastern Europe

27-28 September 2012, Bucharest (Romania)

### Call for Papers

The workshop aims to reopen debate on the area of family policies and gender equality in Central and Eastern Europe, a research field which has seen little exploration to date from the comparative perspective. More particularly, the purpose of this event is to restore the relationship between two interesting phenomena to the heart of current epistemological and methodological debates. The former is the ongoing changes in public intervention in family life, in which the principle of equality between men and women is upheld. The latter concerns the recent metamorphoses in the institution of the family and in social relations between the sexes in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Notwithstanding local language barriers, this call for papers proposes a transnational perspective and encourages not only the confrontation of multiple approaches and domains, but also favours meetings between researchers, and the establishment of scientific networks. In order not to “separate” regional studies from the European context that encompasses them, analyses at the level of the European Union are encouraged. However, proposals which are based on empirical research will be prioritised, as the main objective is to develop a comparative approach of the recent transformations in family policies and “gender regimes” in Central and Eastern Europe.

#### Academic committee:

Ionela Băluță (Associate professor, University of Bucharest); Sandrine Dauphin (Chief editor in CNAF); Anca Dohotariu (PhD EHESS, post-doctoral researcher, CNCSIS); Georgeta Ghebrea (Professor, University of Bucharest); Marie-Thérèse Letablier (Research director in CNRS); Cornelia Mureșan (Associate professor, Babes Bolyai University); Aleksandra Pawlowska (PhD, CERLIS-Paris Descartes); Olivia Samuel (Associate professor, University of Versailles-Saint-Quentin, Printemps); Irène Théry (Research director in EHESS); Monika Wator (PhD, Printemps, University of Versailles-Saint-Quentin).

**Coordination committee:** Anca Dohotariu (PhD EHESS, post-doctoral researcher, CNCSIS), principal coordinator<sup>1</sup>; Ionela Băluță, (Associate Professor, University of Bucharest); Aleksandra Pawlowska (PhD, CERLIS- Paris Descartes), Monika Wator (PhD, Printemps, University of Versailles-Saint-Quentin).

Proposals for papers may be written in English or in French, are to be approximately 300 words in length, and to be sent to the following e-mail address: [ancadoho@yahoo.com](mailto:ancadoho@yahoo.com) The deadline for submission is **1 March 2012**. Proposals must be accompanied by a short presentation of their author (first name, surname, status, institution of origin, contact details), a temporary title and key words (at least 5). Selection of the papers will take place in the month of March. The workshop will be followed by the publication of the papers.

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Family policies constitute a rather complex domain taking into account, on the one hand, the great historical, political and geographical variety of public actions concerning the family, and on the other hand, the considerable diversity of family structures. Generally speaking, measures in favour of the family can be traced back to the nineteenth century, but actual family policies appeared in the period after the Second World War, during a time of precocious demographic transition. Several decades later, in the age of *non-marriage* and everywhere in the industrialised world, one can observe, profound changes in family structures and dynamics (decrease in fertility and marriages, increase in the number of divorces, recomposed families, cohabitation before marriage, and so on.). Family policies, in their turn, have been confronted with new political and social challenges and therefore have changed significantly since the 1970s. Research on family and family policies is situated at the crossroads between several scientific and political issues, and the workshop seeks to reflect on the emerging variety of 'gender regimes', in particular. Everywhere in the European Union policies lay emphasis on the respect of fundamental rights (constitutionally valued rights in general that are superior from a hierarchical point of view) including "equality of treatment between men and women". Consequently, gender equality is a *transversal matter* that is to be found as much at the normative level (especially at the national and European level of political and legal norms) as at the level of family life. In all parts of Europe, the increasing diversity of contemporary families testifies to the growth in the democratic value of equality between the sexes, even if this occurs at different times and paces depending on the country in question.

Taking into account the complex array of European family policies, what may be said about the situation of family policies in Central and Eastern European countries? From 1990 to the present, all post-communist countries have experienced a period of profound political, economic and social change affecting gender relations. In fact, gender relations themselves represented a central dimension of those changes. Nevertheless, family policies have rarely been envisioned in research on local reforms of social protection. Among these research studies, the UNICEF<sup>2</sup> reports underline the fact that family policies in the East have been redefined, without being backed up by a developed and clear family policy *per se*. Considering the three instruments of family policy (family allowances, services caring for small children, leave of absence for parents) there is a strong heterogeneity among Eastern European countries after 1990, despite the fact that the emphasis is usually placed on financial aids for families.

**Three multidisciplinary axes of reflection are envisioned for the workshop.** However, given the multiple possibilities, the themes of the sessions within the workshop, will be defined according to the paper proposals selected.

**Axis 1:** First of all, the notion of *gender mainstreaming*, promoted by the European institutions, together with the different laws passed by the Council of the European Union has succeeded in consolidating the fight against inequalities between the sexes. But what are the "effects" of European norms on the social and family protection systems in the Central and Eastern European countries, and what impact do they have on the different national configurations? Moreover, even if we talk about "family policies pertaining to the social sphere" or if we consider "social policies of the family", the European Commission has shown that one way of conferring more visibility on gender equality in the area of social protection is through the *individualisation of social rights*, in other words the transformation of *family rights*, based on the family relationship, into *individualized rights*, attributed to the person. Nevertheless, what are the limits of this individualisation and how much can we talk about a real individualisation of social rights in the different countries of the "other" Europe? Or better yet, what is the legal and social content of *derived rights* in these countries?

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<sup>2</sup> UNICEF, « Femmes et transitions à l'Est », *Le courrier des pays de l'Est*, n° 1002, 2000, pp. 34-52 ; UNICEF, "Women in Transition", *Regional Monitoring Report*, n° 6, Florence, 1999.

**Axis 2:** Secondly, another essential aspect of affirming the egalitarian principle relates to *conciliating a family life with a career*. This is an issue that makes reference to the ability of national policies to create a new link between the merchandising of certain domestic activities (baby-sitters, cleaning ladies, and so on) and activities that remain un-merchandised. To what degree do the different, post-communist, national instruments of social and family protection favour family-career conciliation, and how? And what is the distance between the legal and political norms in place and day-to-day family life itself? What does local statistical data reveal if it is analyzed from the point of view of family policies and gender equality? And what are the available qualitative methods for refining research hypotheses and for constructing a comparative approach to political measures concerning families in Eastern Europe?

**Axis 3:** Finally, can we really talk about “family policies” in the different Central and Eastern European countries? And if yes, what are their objectives, their instruments and their parameters? Behind all the post-communist norms concerning the family, is there a return to traditional family values, a modernization of the idea of “basic social cell” or is there an acknowledgement of the metamorphoses in contemporary marriage? In addition, taking European directives into consideration, and during the process of elaborating post-communist family policies, should we adopt the ideology underpinning the European directives *per se*, or should we try to adapt these directives to the different social contexts?