

## **Comparative Study on the Effects of Family Policy in French-Speaking Countries**

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### **General introduction**

This contract relates to the comparative analysis of **fertility** and its **determinants**, and in particular that of **family policy**, in three European countries (Belgium, France and Luxembourg). This analysis specifically places its emphasis on the problems of reconciling family and professional life. It is a matter of reviewing studies made until now in order to endeavour to explain fertility and its evolution over the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

What normally dictates the carrying out of studies concerning fertility in the industrial countries is, beyond the care for pure knowledge, a certain anxiety on the part of the authorities in the face of consistently falling or considerably declining rates of fertility. In fact, the **national consequences of a low fertility rate** may be significant, in the long or not so long term, for two reasons. On the one hand, successive generations not being of the same size, the question will be posed as to the financing of retirement<sup>1</sup> for each of them by the following. On the other hand, the population diminishing<sup>2</sup>, an over-sizing might be observed of the equipment necessary, for instance, for the care of children, from their very early age (in crèches, for example) until the end of their schooling.

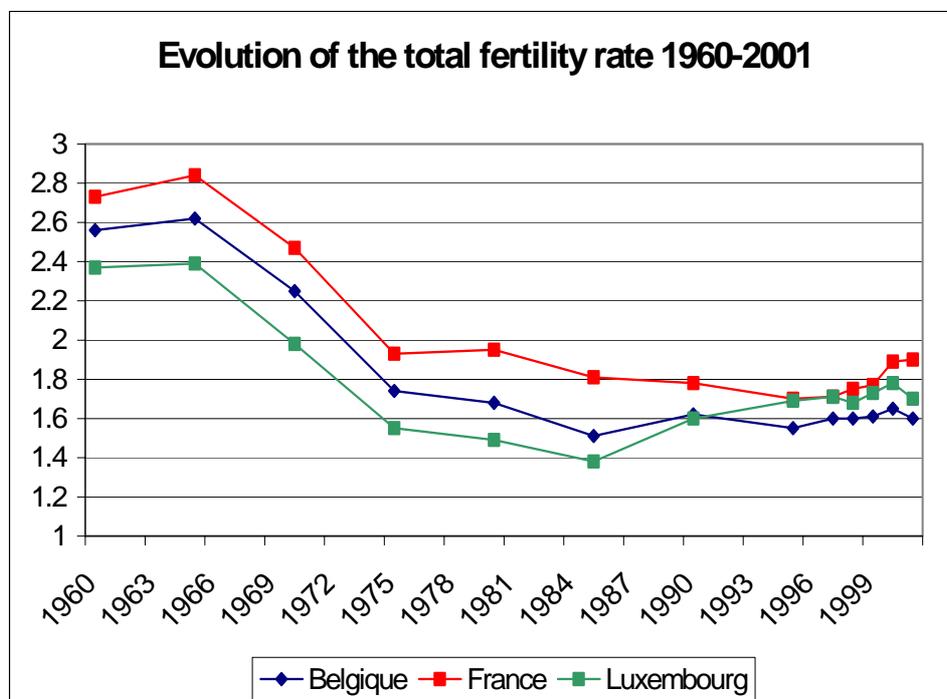
But the study of fertility is not made easier if one limits oneself to a single country, if one wishes to identify the impact of family policy, since within the same country this is identical at a given time for all those individuals with the same characteristics. One might wish to skirt around the problem by comparing situations at different moments in time, but the numerous factors evolving between the two dates make it difficult to isolate the effect of family policy. These two aspects lead to an underlining of the interest of an **international comparison**. In this particular instance, the comparison of the Belgian, French and Luxembourg situations is particularly interesting, on two grounds. On the one hand because these three countries have in common (compared with other European countries) the existence of a family policy, and a rate of fertility which has evolved in a comparable manner until the middle of the 1980's (Eurostat, 2001). On the other hand because they have been distinguished in two aspects since that same period: some parts of the family policy in each of these countries

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<sup>1</sup> One is situated here in a context where the financing of retirement is by distribution and not only by capitalisation.

<sup>2</sup> One argues here by supposing that the migratory balance is nil, and does not therefore balance out the low fertility rate.

have developed differently <sup>3</sup>, and fertility has recovered in France and Luxembourg<sup>4</sup> while it seems to be stagnating in Belgium. The chart below traces the evolution of fertility in each of these three countries, over the last 40 years:



Sources: Eurostat, 2001 (for the years 1960 to 2000) and INED (for the year 2001)

Would this different evolution of fertility be associated with a differing economic evolution according to the three countries considered? Or is it necessary to search for other explanations, in particular from the point of view of public policies implemented in each of the three countries, policies of which the different evolution would make an explanation possible, at least in part, of this change in demographic evolution?

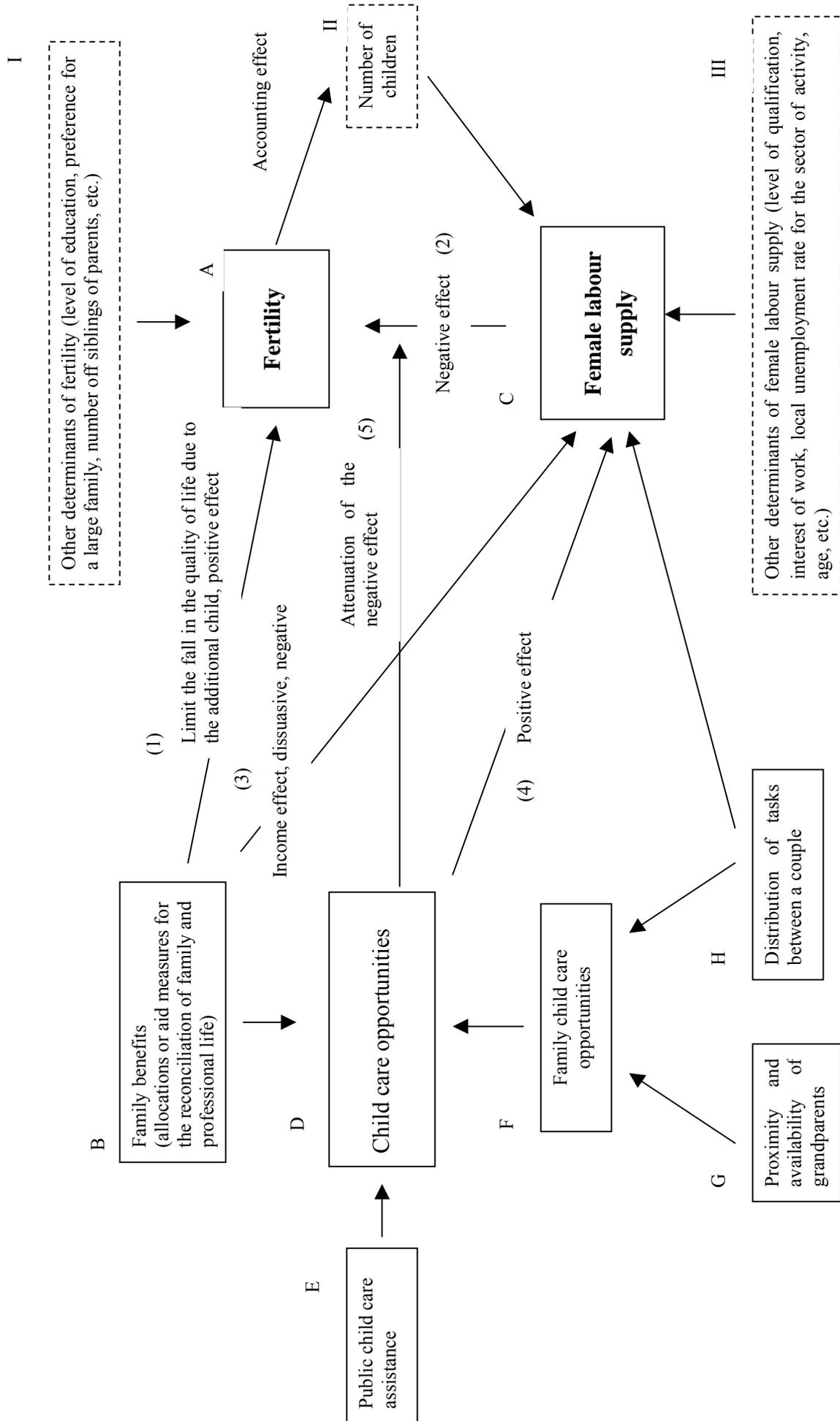
In order to place the possible impact of family policy<sup>5</sup> on fertility, among all the determinants of it, a diagram is used, on which are placed the principal determinants of fertility.

<sup>3</sup> For example, France is distinguished by the putting in place of measures aimed at facilitating access to employment for mothers, by partially taking on responsibility (both financial and practical, by the creation of crèches and other care structures) for looking after their children and, more generally, by attempting to enable them to reconcile family and professional life.

<sup>4</sup> Despite a slight fall in 2001, according to INED figures, which are nonetheless still provisional.

<sup>5</sup> Family policy covers both the monetary benefits which are granted to parents, and the services which are offered to them, in particular with regard to child care.

The supposed determinants of fertility



This diagram illustrates the way in which one may suppose the various determinants of fertility (A) act; those are commented upon which are the object of interest in this analysis (the other determinants are indicated in the boxes shown with hatched lines I and II<sup>6</sup>, with the objective of not hiding them, but they are not commented upon<sup>7</sup>).

Let us first of all consider the two **direct effects on fertility**. The first of them, which is of particular interest to us, is that of **family benefits** (B, arrow 1). These benefits constitute a financial contribution, justified by the fact that the child creates a monetary cost for its family: they therefore limit the fall in the standard of life due to the presence of an additional child, and cannot thus be any disincentive to the arrival of that child.

The second direct effect on fertility is that if the **female labour supply**<sup>8</sup> (C): its effect is represented by arrow 2. In other terms, on average, a high female labour supply would be incompatible with high fertility.

Nevertheless, the role of family benefits could not be limited to that which we are going to describe: that element might occur again on two bases in the analysis of fertility, via the labour supply.

On the one hand, these **family benefits** might have an effect on the labour supply: consisting of financial aid, they might create an income effect and their increase might lead therefore to a reduction in the labour supply (arrow 3): they would therefore be disincentives to work. In this sense, **reducing the labour supply**, they could **indirectly lead to an increase of fertility**, since the labour supply would itself have a negative effect on fertility.

On the other hand, because they constitute an assumption of financial responsibility for the cost of child care, **family benefits** (monetary benefits) would form a part of the ensemble of **determinants of opportunities of care** which parents have (D), in the same way as public aid in favour of looking after young children (E), and the opportunities for child care offered by the family (F). As regards the latter, which arise from the private sphere, they would themselves depend for instance on the geographic proximity of the grandparents, as well as their availability (G), and the distribution of tasks among them<sup>9</sup> (H). All these elements, and therefore particularly family benefits, thus having an effect on the opportunities for child care, might have two **indirect effects on fertility**.

The first of these two effects would be the following: **family benefits**, determinant in part of the **opportunities of care**, would have a positive influence on the **labour supply** (arrow 4): now it has been seen that the labour supply might itself have a negative impact on fertility (arrow 2). As a result, the opportunities of care — and therefore family benefits in particular — would have an **indirect**

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<sup>6</sup> Also depicted in the diagram are the expected determinants of the labour supply (in the box with hatched lines III), since the hypothesis is put forward that it is through that labour supply that certain factors have an indirect effect on fertility.

<sup>7</sup> Let us nonetheless point out that the list of those factors is not exhaustive. In particular, not all those have been indicated which are relative to the view that young parents have of the family.

<sup>8</sup> Theoretically, fertility might also depend on the male labour supply. But this is more often considered as exogenous, and the role of fathers is then analysed essentially within the context of the distribution of tasks between the couple.

<sup>9</sup> This distribution of tasks may certainly only be realised if the parents of the child are a couple.

**influence on fertility.** The underlying hypothesis is then that the choice which mothers make as regards the labour supply and fertility depends on the one and the other, the choice of activity being a condition on the choice of fertility.

The second **indirect effect of family benefits** on fertility would consist of an **attenuation of the negative effect of the labour supply on fertility** (arrow 5). The following hypothesis is put forward: the female labour supply is a given fact, which means to say it is not likely to vary (because it corresponds to a choice by the mother, who wishes to work). So that this labour supply does not have a negative effect on fertility, it is necessary that the additional child does not constitute an obstacle to that activity. In fact, if the mother wishes to work, she may decide not to have an additional child if that would prevent her from working. Now it is because the child requires a presence, and therefore because it costs time that it can really prevent the mother from working. To offer child care opportunities, therefore, is to enable the mother at least in part to avoid the costs in time. Thus being able to continue working, since she is relieved of this cost in time, she is no longer disinclined to have an additional child. In other words, this second indirect effect might consist of making it possible to reconcile labour supply and fertility.

Finally, one might first of all think there is a **paradox** here. In fact, the elements of family policy relating to child care have a positive effect on female labour supply, and the association between labour supply and fertility is negative. A priori, one might therefore be led to conclude of these two relations that the public measures relating to child care have an indirect negative influence on fertility. But, in the second place, this highlighting of the other indirect effect of the public measures regarding the care of young children on fertility allows that paradox to be **removed**.

Highlighting these indirect relations between family policy and fertility might suggest the type of **public measures to be taken in order to encourage fertility**, if that is the target aimed at by the authorities. Two situations must be envisaged, according to whether the authorities wish or not to implement a family policy facilitating child care.

In the first case, if the authorities do not wish to implement a policy facilitating child care, female labour supply might have a negative impact on fertility. Taking this relationship into account, the role of the State would then consist, for instance, of creating conditions favourable to part time professional activity, enabling parents, and in particular mothers, to have more time to spend with their child(ren), without having for all that to cease all professional activity.

In the second case, by way of contrast, if the authorities defined such a child care policy, it would attenuate the negative effect of female labour supply on fertility, or even render that effect nil or even positive. The role of the State could then consist of putting mechanisms in place which might facilitate the care of young children who would not be looked after on a private basis, mechanisms consisting on the one hand of care structures and on the other hand taking at least partial financial responsibility for the costs incurred in looking after children.

Finally, family policy measures having an influence on fertility have as their objective the assumption of two different child costs. On the one hand they

assumed responsibility for the **cost in money**: this is the case with family benefits, which might also have a **direct** influence on fertility. On the other hand they take into account the **cost in time**, which the child engenders: this is the role assigned to public measures which offer child care opportunities having an **indirect** effect on fertility (via the labour supply). Because they cover the two types of costs, which families bear, and particularly mothers, these family policy measures can affect fertility, and thus enable the State to avoid so many fluctuations of it.

Following the logic developed here, the plan adopted in the report will be arranged in two parts: we will investigate the reasons why fertility fell, and then recovered fairly recently in some countries. We will first of all seek to know whether the measures contributing to an assumption of the financial cost of a child have an effective influence on fertility. Then we will attempt, in the second part, to see whether fertility can be explained, directly or indirectly, by measures, which take into consideration the fact that a child costs time.

This account of the literature concerning the case in Belgium, France and Luxembourg will be preceded by a section describing the demographic and economic situation in each of the three countries.

## **Chapter 1. Statistical description of national situations: a review of certain differences between the three countries**

It seems to us to be vital, in order to understand why a particular family policy is implemented in a particular country, and also in order to understand the effects, to have an idea of both the demographic and the economic situation in that country. This is the reason for the first chapter, which consists of an inventory. It begins (in section 1) with a description of the demographic situation, then some elements are put forward (in section 2) describing the relationships maintained by individuals, and more particularly women, even mothers, with the employment market. Finally some figures are presented in relation to family policy, and notably those measures concerned with employment-family reconciliation (in section 3). For all the information provided, commentaries are aimed at revealing any resemblance and/or difference between Belgium, France and Luxembourg.

### **Section 1. Demographic aspects**

The object of this section is to describe<sup>10</sup> the demographic situation in Belgium, France and Luxembourg. Naturally there is an interest in the general situation in the country, thus concerning the entire population, revealed by various general indicators (life expectancy at birth, for instance, or the rates of marriage, divorce, and so on). But, because the report in fact relates to women, figures are also given (when they are available) indicating the characteristics which are personal to them, and which situate them in relation to men.

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<sup>10</sup> Unless otherwise mentioned, the figures we present are those given to us by various national experts; we thank in particular Antoine MATH (IRES, Paris), expert for France. More complete information, relating to all European countries, may be found in the BRADSHAW report *et al.*, to appear.

### A. The total population and its evolution

	Belgium	France	Luxembourg
Total population (2000)	10,239,085	59,225,700	435,700
of which foreigners	8.8%	7.4%	36.6%
Population density (inhabitants per km <sup>2</sup> )(1998)	334.4	107.4	164.9
of which around the capital	5913.3	909.9	1673

Source: Eurostat, European Social Statistics, *Demography*, European Commission, Edition 2001.

The three countries analysed are not of comparable *size*: with almost sixty million inhabitants, France is close to six times more heavily populated than Belgium; as for Luxembourg, it is the smallest country in Europe, with just half a million inhabitants. The situation in the latter country is most particular in respect of the proportion of foreigners in the total population: they constitute more than one third (against only 8.8% in Belgium, and 7.4% in France<sup>11</sup>).

If one compares *population density* in the three countries, France this time comes last. It is in Belgium that the population is more contained; and this is especially the case in the region of Brussels, where there are more than 5,900 inhabitants per square kilometre. In comparison, the density of the other two regions around the respective capitals, although they are considerably above the national averages, is considerably less than that observed in Belgium: it has 909.9 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> in the Ile de France, and 1,673<sup>12</sup> inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> in the City of Luxembourg.

### B. Marriages, divorces and single parents

	Belgium	Year	France	Year	Luxembourg	Year
Marriage rate for 1000 individuals in the total population (*)	4.4	2000	5.2	2000	4.9	2000
Divorce rate for 1000 individuals in the total population (*)	2.6	2000	2.0	1999	2.3	2000
Percentage of single parents	23	2000	12	1999	11	2000
Percentage of single mothers among single parents	68	2000	85	1999	93	2000

(\*) Source: Eurostat, *European Social Statistics, Demography*, European Commission, Edition 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Where this rate has been maintained since the beginning of the 1990s (cf. Insee, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> This figure comes from the 1991 census (STATEC, CEPS/Instead).

It is in France that *marriages* are the most frequent. The rise observed in 2000 is confirmed in 2001 (DOISNEAU, 2002), thus invalidating the hypotheses of the "millennium effect" (PRIOUX, 2001). We note that France offers another type of union, the PACS (Civil Solidarity Pact), which came into force on 15 November 1999; in the first quarter 2001, only 37,000 PACS had been registered, which seems relatively few.

Belgium combines the least frequent marriages and the most frequent *divorces*. Conversely, it is in France that the most marriages take place and the least divorces. Luxembourg occupies an intermediary position.

As to the *percentage of single parents*, it is considerably higher in Belgium, approximately double that observed in France and Luxembourg. What is also striking is that it is much more frequent in Belgium that the single parent is the father: whilst this is the case with only 7% and 15% of single parents in France and in Luxembourg, the percentage reaching 32% in Belgium.

### C. Around birth

	Belgium	Year	France	Year	Luxembourg	Year
Life expectancy at birth						
- men	74.8	1998	74.9	1999	74.7	1999
- women	81.2	1998	82.3	1999	81.2	1999
Rate of live births	11.1	1999	13.2	2000	13.1	2000
Percentage of births to adolescents	2.6	1995	1.8	1996	2.2	1999
Percentage of births outside marriage	8.0(**)	1986	21.9	1986	10.2	1986
	12.6	1991	40.7	1998	18.7	1999
Rate of infant mortality (*)	8.0	1990	7.3	1990	7.3	1990
	5.2	2000	4.6	2000	5.1	2000

(\*) Source: Eurostat, *European Social Statistics, Demography*, European Commission, Edition 2001.

(\*\*) Source: CALOT (1992b).

In 1998, *life expectancy at birth* was quite close in the three countries, especially among men; they reached almost 75 years of age. That for women was higher than that for men everywhere, notably in France, where women gain a little more than one year on their Belgian and Luxembourg neighbours.

The *percentage of births to adolescents* is relatively low, France being the country where this occurrence is least frequent (and Belgium is the highest).

As to the *percentage of births outside marriage*, it is considerably different in the three countries. So, in 1986, it was lowest in Belgium, and highest in France: one child in five was born outside marriage. The difference between the countries has been further accentuated over the years: at the end of the century, the proportion of children born outside marriage reached more than 40% in France, which was more than double the proportion observed in Luxembourg.

Finally, the *rate of infant mortality* was lowest in France in 2000, less than that in the other two countries; it is almost equal in Belgium and Luxembourg. It

can be noted that, in 1990, France was already in a better situation than that of Belgium; but, at that date, Luxembourg occupied an identical situation to that of France. The reduction in infant mortality was therefore higher in France and Belgium.

#### **D. Birth rate, and final number of children**

	Belgium	Year	France	Year	Luxembourg	Year
Total fertility rate	1.55	1995	1.70	1995	1.69	1995
	1.5	1999	1.79	1999	1.7 (L) – 1.8 (Etg) (*)	1999
	1.65	2000	1.89	2000	1.78	2000
Final number of children, for the generation of women born in 1960	1.83		2.09		1.75	

Source: Eurostat, *European Social Statistics, Demography*, European Commission, Edition 2001.

(\*) LANGERS Jean (2001), "Demography of the foreign population 1950-2000", Population and Employment No 2/01, July 2001. That year the economic indicator of birth rate for the entirety of Luxembourg was 1.73.

By definition, the total fertility rate may reveal sometimes significant fluctuations which are not necessarily due to a change in the level of birth rate, but rather to a change in the average age at which women give birth (PRIOUX, 1996, 2000). On average, in Western countries and in particular in Belgium, France and Luxembourg, this index under-estimates the real level of birth rate, because births there are later and later (cf. following paragraph). Nonetheless, according to EKERT-JAFFE (1986), long-term monitoring of this index enables its effects to be clarified (for example, if it increases at a given time, and then does not fall afterwards, then final number of children will increase), and do not oblige to base comparisons on final number of children (that is to say only on women old enough for their final number of children then to be definitively calculated).

The *total fertility rate* reveals a difference between the three countries. In 1995 and 1999, France and Luxembourg were very close, with a rate considerably higher than that in Belgium. But in 2000, France moved away considerably, whilst the index stagnated in Luxembourg. It increased in Belgium, but without catching up any delay in comparison with the other two countries.

According to DOISNEAU (2001), in 2000 the total fertility rate in France returned to the level it held at the beginning of the 1980s. And the recovery was confirmed in 2001 (DOISNEAU, 2002), whilst a rise over two consecutive years had not been observed since 1981-1982. As a result, the author suggests that the rise observed in 2000 was not due to the "year 2000" effect. On the other hand, in Luxembourg a fall of the total fertility rate (by 3%) was observed in 2001.

As regards France, PRIOUX (2001) underlines the fact that the increase in births observed in 1999 and 2000 was all the greater considering that the number of women of fertile age fell. Moreover the rise in the number of births concerns all age groups, and not only the older, in contrast to what was observed until then (cf.

LUTINIER, 1996, who indicates that the fall of the total fertility rate observed at the beginning of the 1990s was associated with the fact that birth rate increases after 35 years, but to a lesser extent than the fall in birth rate among women aged less than 25 years). Concluding on the results relating to the years 2000 and 2001, PRIOUX suggests that this could be the end of the process of late motherhood.

*Final number of children* also places France in first position, but with Belgium ahead of Luxembourg. It may be observed that, for women born in 1960, the renewal of generations is still assured in France (the only European country along with Ireland which is in this situation).

#### **E. Average age of mothers at motherhood**

	Belgium	Year	France	Year	Luxembourg	Year
Average age of mothers at first child	24.6 years	1980	24.9 years	1980	-	1980
	26.5 years	1990	27.0 years	1990	26.5 years	1990
	26.9 years(*)	1993	28.1 years	1995	27.9 years	1995
					28.3 years	1999
Average age of mothers at motherhood, for mothers born in ...	25.9years	1945	26.0 years	1945	26.5 years	1950
	27.3 years	1960	27.6 years	1960	28.6 years	1960

Source: Eurostat, *European Social Statistics, Demography*, European Commission, Edition 2001.

(\*) This figure was provided to us by a Belgian national expert, a member of the UFSIA team.

*The average age of mothers at the birth of their first child* increased over the years in each of the three countries. In 1990, a year when the figures are available in the three countries, it is in France that it is highest; it is then identical in Belgium and in Luxembourg.

As regards the *average age at motherhood*, it also increases over the years, that is to say mothers born in 1960 on average had their children later than those born in 1945, and this in the three countries analysed. But it is in Luxembourg that this indicator is highest, for each of the two generations.

#### **F. Average age at marriage**

	Belgium	Year	France	Year	Luxembourg	Year
Average age of men at first marriage	26.3 years	1990	27.5 years	1990	26.9years	1990
	27.4 years	1995	28.9years	1995	28.9years	1995
	28.9 years	1999	31.2years	1999	30.7years	1999
Average age of women at first marriage	24.3 years	1990	25.6years	1990	25.4years	1990
	25.4 years	1995	26.9years	1995	26.6years	1995
	26.6 years	1999	29.1years	1999	28.3years	1999

Source: Eurostat, *European Social Statistics, Demography*, European Commission, Edition 2001.

In the three countries, *the average age of men at first marriage* is higher than that of *women* (by 2 to 2.3 years in Belgium, by 1.9 to 2.1 years in France, by 1.5 to 2.4 years in Luxembourg, according to the date retained). And, in the three countries likewise, the average age at first marriage increased over the last ten years, for men as for women.

In 1990, it was highest in France, the difference between countries being nonetheless more marked for men than for women. In 1999, France was still in first place. On the other hand, in Belgium men and women married earlier for the first time.

#### **G. Population breakdown by age (as at 1 January 2000)**

	Belgium	France	Luxembourg
0-14 years	17.6	18.9	18.9
15-44 years	41.9	42.1	43.4
45-64 years	23.7	23.1	23.4
65 years and over	16.8	15.9	14.3

These figures show that the Belgian population is markedly older than the French population, and above all the Luxembourg population, notably because children there are proportionally less numerous, and seniors (65 years and over) proportionally more numerous.

In conclusion, it emerges from the various indicators presented here that the demographic situations in Belgium, in France and in Luxembourg are close in certain respects, but different in others. From the point of view of resemblance, one may in particular quote life expectancy at birth, or the evolution of the age of women at first motherhood, or even the evolution of the age at marriage, for men and for women.

On the other hand, the situations diverge as regards for example the size of the total population, the percentage of single parents and, among them, that of single mothers, the proportion of children born outside marriage, and birth rate (whether it is the total fertility rate, or final descent). The majority of these indicators show the particular position in France.

After these figures relating to the demographic situation in the three countries, we present those which describe the situation in relation to the employment market.

#### **Section 2. Professional life**

The object of this section is to present a picture of the situations on national employment markets, and more particularly to indicate the position held by women, and possibly mothers. Here too, the commentary is oriented so as to take account of the differences between the three countries analysed, and any resemblance.

**A. Couples: one active or both?**

	Belgium 2000	France 1999	Luxembourg 2000
Percentage of couples where the two parents are active occupied	67	44	36
Percentage of couples where only one of the parents is active occupied	25	26	58
Other cases	8	30	6

The situations on the employment market are clearly very different from country to country. One of the distinctive aspects is in Luxembourg, as to the *percentage couples where one is active*: there they are considerably in the majority, whilst they represent just a quarter of couples in Belgium and in France. A second significant point concerns the high percentage in France of couples where none of the parents is actively occupied (they may therefore be active not occupied or inactive).

**B. Scheme of full-time and part-time work, for couples with a child of less than six years, in 1998: preferences and reality (in percentages)**

	Belgium	France	Luxembourg
Man and woman work full-time * preference * reality	54.8 46.0	52.4 38.8	27.5 23.5
Man works full-time, and woman part-time * preference * reality	28.8 19.4	21.9 14.4	29.9 27.0
Man works full-time and woman does not work * preference * reality	13.4 27.3	14.1 38.3	12.4 49.1
Other cases * preference * reality	3.0 7.3	11.7 8.4	30.2 0.4

Source: OCDE, Employment Outlook, 2001.

As regards the *preferences* expressed by the couples questioned, one observes in the three countries that they rarely express a preference for the scheme in which the man is active full-time, whilst the woman does not work (the percentages vary from 12% in Luxembourg to 14% in France). But this is the only characteristic with regard to which the three countries are in a similar situation. For the remainder, the situation is extremely contrasted.

So, in Belgium and in France the majority of couples spoke in favour of a situation where the two parents are active full-time. In Luxembourg, only one quarter of couples, approximately, had the same preference.

Finally, the scheme where the man is active full-time whilst the woman is part-time was desired by almost 30% of those questioned in Belgium and Luxembourg, but hardly exceeded 20% in France.

But the *real situation* on the employment market is such that on the one hand the preferences are not always respected, and on the other hand the three countries may thus be regrouped differently. So, in the three countries, the proportion of couples where the woman is not active is much higher than desired. It is more particularly in Luxembourg, where almost one half of couples in fact find themselves in this scheme. In contrast, one observes less often in reality that it is desired on the one hand that the mother works part-time (except in Luxembourg), and on the other hand, and above all in France, that the two parents are active full-time.

**C. Monthly income, in purchasing power parity (reference: the Euro)**

	Belgium 2000	France 2001	Luxembourg 2001
Average monthly earnings of the entire population	2591	2302	3002
<i>Median</i> monthly earnings of the entire population	2318	1910	2573
Ratio of average and median earnings for the entire population	112	121	117
Average monthly earnings of men	2740	2463	3177
<i>Median</i> monthly earnings of men	2391	1974	2648
Ratio of average and median monthly earnings for men	115	125	120
Average monthly earnings of women	2245	1983	2648
<i>Median</i> monthly earnings of women	2092	1808	2295
Ratio of average and median monthly earnings for women	107	110	115

It is in Luxembourg that *average and median monthly earnings* is highest, both for the entire population and for both sexes. It can be noted that the average and median monthly earnings of women is lower than that of men in the three countries.

As expected, in each of the three countries, median income is lower than average income, which means that the distribution of income is not totally equal. The inequality of distribution of income is all the more severe since average income is a long way from median income. If one compares the two incomes, it emerges that in France the distribution of income is more unequal for all individuals. It is also in France that the distribution of income is more unequal for men, but in Luxembourg it is for women.

**D. Proportion of unemployed in the entire active population, and for different categories of women**

	Belgium 2000	France 2001	Luxembourg 2001
Percentage of unemployed in the entire active population	5	9	2
Percentage of unemployed women among active women	5	11	3
Percentage of unemployed women among active women living as part of a couple	4	10	3 (2000)
Percentage of unemployed women among active single mothers	18	19	7 (2000)

What is striking here is the situation specific to France, which has a rather high unemployment rate throughout, much higher than in Belgium and Luxembourg<sup>13</sup>. Luxembourg has the most favourable situation.

But the situation specific to single mothers should be underlined: in Belgium and in France, almost one single mother in five is unemployed. And in each of the three countries the situation for these women on the employment market is considerably worse than that for all other active individuals.

**E. Proportion of those active occupied among mothers with at least one child aged less than 5 years, according to whether they live as part of a couple or single**

	Belgium (2000)	France (2001)	Luxembourg (2000)
Percentage of active occupied mothers among those living as part of a couple	70	59	62
Percentage of active occupied mothers among those who are single	54	48	95 <sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> The figures provided here are those, which are calculated by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

<sup>14</sup> For Luxembourg, the figures concerning single mothers are only based on 12 observations.

What emerges here is the difference to be observed between Belgium and France on the one hand and Luxembourg on the other: in the first two countries the proportion of those active occupied is lower among single mothers than among mothers living as part of a couple, whilst the opposite is the case observed in Luxembourg.

Single mothers who are not active occupied are either not active or active but without a job (that is to say unemployed). They may thus be eligible to receive various benefits: unemployment benefit, or social minima. These are different in each country, and are more generous in France<sup>15</sup> than in Belgium or Luxembourg. This may perhaps explain why it is in France that the rate of activity of single mothers is lower.

#### **F. Rate of activity of women by age, in 1999**

	Belgium	France	Luxembourg
Entire female population: women from 15 to 64 years	56.0	62.2	50.2
Women aged 15 to 24 years	30.1	32.5	31.9
Women aged 25 to 49 years	77.3	79.7	64.6
Women aged 50 to 64 years	28.2	45.6	27.0

Source: Eurostat, Statistical Yearbook 2001.

Concerning the entire female population, in France women are more often active: this is the case with almost two women in three, against one in two in Luxembourg. Belgium is in an intermediary position in this regard. LEJEALLE (2001) underlines the fact that the rate of activity in Luxembourg is one of the lowest in Europe, the European average at that date being 59%. CALOT (1992b), dealing with Luxembourg, suggests that the lower degree of participation of women on the employment market is favoured by the significance of the cross-border workforce in that country.

If one then controls for age, the differences between the countries become more obvious, only when age rises. So, at the youngest age (that is to say for women aged 15 to 24 years), the proportion of those active is almost identical in the three countries: it does not therefore seem to show any national peculiarities. On the other hand, for women aged 25 to 49 years, a clear difference is to be noted between Belgium and France on the one hand and Luxembourg on the other. In the three countries, the rate of activity is considerably higher than that of younger women, but the increase is least in Luxembourg. Finally, for the oldest age group of women, France is in an even more different situation than that in the other two countries: the rate of activity is certainly reduced considerably, but it is still almost one woman in two who is active there. In contrast, in Belgium as in Luxembourg, the fall in activity is more marked, women in this age group being less active than those who are the youngest.

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<sup>15</sup> This is because France is the only one of the three countries to offer a benefit specifically targeted at single parents, the Single Parent Allowance.

**G. Rate of part-time employment, in 1999**

	Belgium	France	Luxembourg
Rate of part-time employment for men	3.5	5.6	1.8
Rate of part-time employment for women	33.3	31.7	24.6

Source: Eurostat, Statistical Yearbook 2001.

The difference that can be observed between the rate of part-time employment for men and for women is very clear: men occupy such positions considerably less often, in all three countries analysed.

In Luxembourg this form of employment is less frequent for men, but also for women. In Belgium and in France, the latter are one third occupied in such positions.

What conclusion can be drawn regarding the situation on the employment market in each of the three countries? In terms of unemployment and salary, the situation is more favourable in Luxembourg, both for the entire active population and for women. In France, on the other hand, it is the least favourable. But taking into account the preferences expressed by parents as to the scheme of activity of the couple these first observations can be placed in context: in Luxembourg, the proportion of women who are not active when they do not wish to be in this case is particularly high.

**Section 3. The weight of family policy in the budgets of the three countries, and some indications concerning the care of young children**

Shown here are some factors, which enable the importance of family policy in Belgium, France and Luxembourg to be established, in terms of the budget dedicated to it, and also in terms of the services offered to families, notably as regards the care of children. A comparison is also made here between the three countries.

**A. Proportion represented by family benefits in Gross Domestic Product**

	Belgium	France	Luxembourg
Proportion of family benefits in 1990	2.4	2.5	2.5
in 1995	2.3	2.6	3.3

Here the comparison is between the proportion of family benefits represented in national GDP in 1990 and in 1995. In 1990, it is almost identical in the three countries. On the other hand, five years later, it has increased considerably in Luxembourg, whilst it has changed little in the other two countries (up very slightly in France and down slightly, to the same extent, in Belgium).

According to JEANDIDIER *et al.* (1995), it is France which is the most generous as regards families with young children, or those with low incomes, or even single-parent families. On the other hand, for overall generosity, Luxembourg is in first place, followed by Belgium, and then France, notably

because it does not grant family allowances for the first child, and because the age limit for receipt of family allowances there is relatively low, equal to 21 year whilst it is 25 years in Belgium, and even 27 years in Luxembourg<sup>16</sup>.

**B. Proportion represented by family allowances in total household income**

	Belgium	France	Luxembourg
Proportion of family allowances in 1995	3.7	3.2	2.4

Source: JEANDIDIER *et al.* (1996).

It is in Belgium that family allowances represent the most significant proportion of the total income of families. We note that the classification, which appears here, is not identical to that which was offered previously concerning the generosity of family allowances.

**C. The most frequent paid forms of care of young children, and the existence of subsidies**

	Belgium 1999	France 2000	Luxembourg 2000
Paid form of care most frequent for aged 2 years and 11 months	Day care families	childminder	childminder
Assumption of costs associated with this form of care:			
* existence of allowances granted under subject to resources	yes	yes	no
* existence of tax deductions	yes	yes	yes

For children aged two years and eleven months (age beyond which some family allowances are not granted), the most frequent paid form of care is identical in France and in Belgium: it is the childminder. In Luxembourg, it is also more often a private person who cares for children of that age, although not approved: that status does not exist.

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. THELOT *et al.* (1998). These figures correspond to the maximum age until which a child may be considered in charge, in particular if it is a student.

**D. Types of reception structure for young children, and the number of those structures (where relevant)**

Belgium(*)	1999	France	1999	Luxembourg (***)	2002
<i>Collective care environment subsidised by ONE</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● crèches (237)</li> <li>● pre-care (40) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● commune child reception centre (**) (85)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<i>Forms of official care</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Approved maternal assistants</li> <li>● family crèches (1103)</li> <li>● collective crèches (3560)</li> <li>● parental crèches (740)</li> <li>● home care</li> </ul>	Crèches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● subsidised (16)</li> <li>● not subsidised (37)</li> </ul>
<i>Home care environment subsidised by ONE</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● supervised carers (89)</li> </ul>	<i>Forms of non-official care</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● non-approved independent carers</li> </ul>	Care centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● subsidised (24)</li> <li>● not subsidised (46)</li> </ul>
<i>Collective care environment not subsidised by ONE</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● children's homes (468)</li> </ul>			Day centres (****)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● subsidised (20)</li> <li>● not subsidised (18)</li> </ul>
<i>Home care environment not subsidised by ONE</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● independent carers (765)</li> </ul>			Independent care centres ("day mothers")	

(\*) Source: OECD, 1999, *Thematic examination of the policy of education and care of young children*, Report presented by the French Community in Belgium. These forms of care, and more particularly the calculation made of them only concern the French Community in Belgium.

(\*\*): For children from 0 to 6 years.

(\*\*\*): Source: Ministry of the Family in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg (2002), Activity Report 2001.

(\*\*\*\*): For children from 4 to 12 years.

In Luxembourg, the total facility for the care of children is 1,828 places (or "chairs"), of which 1,364 are specifically for children aged from 0 to 4 years (and 183 additional for children from 3 to 6 years). As regards "day mothers", private independent persons, no census is taken of them, and so the number is not known (LEJEALLE *et al.*, 1999).

In Belgium, approval and supervision of care facilities for young children may be entrusted to three bodies: the "office de la naissance et de l'enfance" (ONE) for the French Community, the "Kind en Gezin" for the Flemish Community, and the Executive of the German-speaking Community for the latter.

For France, the figures are not well known. Those provided here come from DRESS, and were presented at the Family Conference on 15 June 2000. According to RIGNOLS (1996), in 1990 there was a shortage of some 264,000 approved care places. According to DESPLANQUES (1994), the different forms of care are not equally spread over French territory, for instance the Ile-de-France concentrating 46% of collective crèche places in 1990. This regional difference would therefore explain in part the choice of forms of care which parents choose, those living in the Ile-de-France thus opting for the crèche in 33% of cases, against 10% of parents living on other French regions.

### **E. Sending children to school**

	Belgium 1999	France 2000	Luxembourg 2000
Percentage of children under 3 years sent to school or placed in care	41% up to 2.5 years 86% for 2.5-3 years	39%	16%
Percentage of children of 3 and 4 years sent to school or placed in care	75% (*)	100%	64%

(\*) This percentage relates to children aged from 2.5 to 6 years.

Here the odd one out is France, where all children aged 3 to 4 years are sent to nursery school. The figure for Luxembourg, relatively low compared with that for the other two countries, could evolve in years to come if early learning classes for this age group implemented in 1998 would be developed (cf. BORSENBARGER *et al.*, 2000).

Summing up all these tables, we feel it can be concluded that the demographic situations in Belgium, France and Luxembourg are certainly not very different, but for all that are not so very close. Family policies also differ from one country to another: this can be seen from the weight of family allowances in national GDP, and in the forms of care and rates of sending older children to school.

As a consequence, it is not possible to reach a conclusion as to the degree of effectiveness of these different policies with regard to family assistance.

### **Chapter 2. Birth rate down: why?**

Why has the birth rate fallen since the 1960s in Belgium, France and Luxembourg? We make the hypothesis that this fall may be explained principally by an increase in female activity, which brings about a reduction of the non-working time available to mothers, time which they would otherwise have spent on domestic chores and their children.

Children present two costs to the household. The **monetary costs** are those which first come to mind. They are associated with the need to feed, clothe, educate and care for the child. In fact the increase in female activity actually permits the family to support these monetary costs more easily. But children also present a **cost in time**, which does not necessarily come down to any monetary cost: in some cases, there are no services available as substitute for the time the mother dedicates to her children. For example, let us suppose that two parents are active full-time, and that care services are non-existent around them; the choice of the parents is then of reduced professional activity, or reduced birth rate. The fact that they have the means to pay for care services is irrelevant, since there is no such service. In other cases, on the other hand, the services exist, and they enable the parents, and essentially the mother, to reconcile family and professional life.

The object of this chapter is successively to describe the public measures implemented by each of the three countries to assume at least partially these two

sorts of costs. It will then be seen whether existing literature reveals any impact of these measures on birth rate, be it direct or indirect (through the labor supply of the mother). We stress immediately that this literature is relatively meagre in Luxembourg, and even more so in Belgium, where it is practically non-existent. The review of the literature is therefore essentially French<sup>17</sup>.

Before moving on to this review of the literature, it should be explained that this only considers **women who live as part of a couple**. Of course, a not insignificant proportion of children live in single-parent families headed by the mother<sup>18</sup>. For these women, the choice of having an additional child or not cannot be regarded in the same terms as by women who live as part of a couple: it is not a question of sharing domestic and parental tasks with the spouse, and professional activity is more an obligation than a choice, to the extent that the woman must work in order to have the means for the family to exist<sup>19</sup>. And it will therefore be important to analyse the evolution of birth rate within these single-parent families, but this should be done in a way broadly separate from the analysis of birth rate in couples, and against a different background from that of the problematics of employment-family reconciliation. Those problems are the ones to which this research contract relates, which leads us as a consequence to restrict ourselves to the analysis of birth rate among women who live as part of a couple. Nonetheless this lack of literature concerning birth rate in single-parent families is not as annoying as one might believe: a good many children living in these families were born when their mother was actually living as part of a couple. As a consequence, omission of the case of single-parent families is much less irritating in a study of birth rate than one might first of all think<sup>20</sup>.

We would again stress that we are well aware that birth rate is certainly not only a matter for women, but results rather from conjugal strategies (BAGAVOS *et al.*, 2000). On that basis, the analysis of birth rate, just like that of reconciling family and professional life, should be viewed both from the point of view of fathers and of mothers. Nevertheless, because in reality and as we explain, reconciliation is almost exclusively initiated and continued by mothers (cf. for example JUNTER-LOISEAU, 1996; GLAUDE, 1999), and because the division of tasks within the couple remains very non-egalitarian (cf. for example BROUSSE, 1999), it is really from the **sole point of view of mothers** that we are

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<sup>17</sup> As regards that review of the literature, we must also stress that it does not relate to benefits associated with healthcare policy, which might also have an impact on fertility; nevertheless, it may be considered that they are outside the field of family policy.

<sup>18</sup> In Belgium, 15.6% of families are headed by a single woman; this is the case with 10.2% of families in France and Luxembourg (Eurostat, 2001).

<sup>19</sup> Clannish families are not being considered here, where several income-providers live together, or specific cases where an older child, still living in the parental home, is also active.

<sup>20</sup> Having excluded an analysis of single mothers, the report does not present the family allowances which are specifically intended for them, as is the case with the single parent allowance in France, although that allowance was extremely successful among the group concerned. Moreover, since the request for the report was not centred on poor children, we are not presenting the measures intended for them (such as the minimum guaranteed income supplement in Luxembourg). Nonetheless, we do not contest the fact that these measures may have an impact on fertility.

viewing the subject of employment-family reconciliation and that of birth rate.

**Section 1. Birth rate, adversely affected by the monetary cost of a child, perhaps slowed less sharply in view of the existence of family allowances**

Some family policy measures aim at assuming part responsibility for the monetary cost of children, whatever the mothers' choice of activity. It could be that, thus relieving the parents of that cost, they then have an impact on birth rate. It is that impact which interests us in this section, researching Belgian, French and Luxembourg literature if it has been found. We are nonetheless first presenting the family policy measures, which permit child cost to be assumed without this being subject to a condition of professional activity.

**§1. Financial measures: various family allowances, as well as fiscal devices**

Here the distinction is drawn, in the description of financial measures<sup>21</sup>, between family assistance, family allowances and fiscal devices.

**A. Family allowances which constitute financial assistance for the family whatever the mother's choice of activity**

Here the various family allowances are presented which are included in this type of measure.

**1. Maternity allowance**

The birth of a child opens the right to a lump-sum grant in Belgium and Luxembourg. The amount of the allowance is determined in Belgium by the status of the child, and paid once. On the other hand, it is lump sum in Luxembourg (but subject to the condition that the mother and child submit to a certain number of medical examinations, the frequency of which is determined by legislation), and payment is made in three tranches.

**2. Family allowances**

The right to family allowances is open as from the first child in Belgium and Luxembourg, whilst it is only open from the second child in France. The age limit is 18 years in the first two countries. It may be extended to 25 years in Belgium and 27 years in Luxembourg if the child continues to receive education. In the case where the child is handicapped, it is extended to 21 years in Belgium and abolished in Luxembourg. In France, the age limit for payment of family allowances is fixed at 21 years (since 1 January 2000). In Luxembourg, the amount of family allowances per child is determined in relation to the family group to which the child belongs.

Age supplements are provided in the three countries. The first supplement concerns children from 6 to 11 years and the second those from 12 years or more

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<sup>21</sup> By financial measures we mean measures, both social and fiscal, which are aimed at all mothers whatever their choice of professional activity: active occupied full-time or part-time, active not occupied or not active, they may receive this assistance, possible under certain grant conditions not associated with their activity status.

in Belgium and Luxembourg. In France, these supplements arise later: the first concerns children from 12 years, and the second children aged 16 years.

### **3. Special allowance for a handicapped child**

In the case of a child being handicapped, a special monthly allowance is added to the family allowance. It is paid until the age of 21 years in Belgium and 20 years in France. The amount is determined in relation to the degree of handicap. In Luxembourg, the allowance is paid until the child is 18 years old, without age limit in the case of severe handicap.

### **4. Return to school allowance**

In Luxembourg, an annual return to school allowance is paid for each child from the age of 6 years and up to the end of its schooling, with an age limit of 27 years for students. As for family allowances, its amount is determined in relation to the family group to which the child belongs. It is increased for children aged 12 years or more.

The return to school allowance is also paid in France, but is means tested, up to the age of 18 years. It does not exist in Belgium.

### **5. Young child allowance**

In France, a young child allowance is granted to the household whose resources do not exceed a certain ceiling, for each child born or to be born, to count from the 4<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy and up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> month after the birth in the case of a short young child allowance and up to 3 years in the case of a long young child allowance. The applicable resource ceiling varies according to the status and number of children in charge.

### **6. The family supplement**

In France, a means-tested family supplement is paid to households or persons in charge of at least 3 children aged 3 years or more, under the same financial conditions as that applicable to young child allowance. The family supplement may not be cumulated with a young person allowance, except during the period of pregnancy, or with a parental education allowance.

### **7. Orphan allowance**

An orphan allowance is paid in the three countries studied.

In France, the family support allowance is paid up to the age of 20 years for the child losing one of its two parents, for the child not recognised by one of its two parents or for the child where one of its two parents is considered as unable to face its maintenance obligation.

In Belgium, the orphan child is entitled to an orphan allowance insofar as the surviving parent, if such should be the case, has no new partner living with the family.

The Luxembourg legislation does not provide for orphan allowance within the context of family allowances. However, the orphan child receives a pension within the context of survival benefits provided by the social security legislation,

and up to the age of 18 years, or even 27 years if the child continues its studies. The payment of the pension is subject to a condition of 12 months obligatory insurance over the three years preceding death. The amount of the pension is determined in relation to the duration of the insurance career of the insured person.

The following tables recapitulate all these family policy measures.

<b>Birth grant</b>	<b>Belgium</b>	<b>France</b>	<b>Luxembourg</b>
	<b>Yes</b> « Allocation de naissance »	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b> « Allocation de naissance »
<b>Conditions</b>	Same as for 'allocations familiales'		The women must be domiciliated in Luxembourg Both mother and child must have done the required medical examinations
<b>Duration</b>	paid in one part		Paid in three parts : prenatal allowance, natal allowance and post natal allowance.
<b>Allowance</b>	EUR 964,40 for the first birth or for each adopted child EUR 725,60 for the second and each subsequent birth		EUR: 1576,47 (or EUR 525,49 for each part)
<b>Social contribution</b>	No		

Family allowances	Belgium		France		Luxembourg	
	Yes « Allocations familiales »		Yes « Allocations familiales »		Yes « Allocations familiales »	
<b>Conditions</b>	Personal right for each child brought up continuously in Belgium and with a legal residence there.		Family allowances from the 2 <sup>nd</sup> child.		Personal right for each child brought up continuously in Luxembourg and with a legal residence there.	
<b>Child's age limit</b>	Normal: 18 years. Vocational training or further education: 25 years. Serious infirmity: 21 years (no limit for those who were already aged 21 on 1st July 1987).		Normal: 20 years with the reservation that the income does not exceed 55% of the minimum wage (SMIC).		Normal: 18 years. Vocational training/further education: 27 years. Serious infirmity: No limit.	
<b>Monthly amount</b>	1st child: EUR 71,18. 2nd child: EUR 131,71. 3rd child and subsequent children: EUR 196,66.		1 child: EUR 0 2 children: EUR 108,85 3 children: EUR 248,32 4 children: EUR 387,78 Each subsequent child: EUR 139,47		1st child: EUR 168,15 2 children: EUR 399 3 children: EUR 727 Each subsequent child: EUR 327	
<b>Age supplements</b>	Supplement for child in 1st order, receiving the normal rate (not handicapped): aged 6 – 12 years : EUR 12,40 aged 12 – 18 years : EUR 18,88 (from 01.01.2003) aged more than 18 years : EUR 21,77 (from 01.01.2009)  Other children (incl. handicapped children): aged 6 – 12 years : EUR 24,73 aged 12 – 18 years : EUR 37,79 (from 01.01.2003) aged more than 18 years : EUR 48,05 (from 01.01.2009)  These amounts are applicable for children born after 01.01.2001. For children born before this date, amounts of the previous legislation are applicable.		Child over 11 years: EUR 30,62 Child over 16 years: EUR 54,43 No supplement for the 1 <sup>st</sup> child in families with less than 3 children.		Children aged 6 and more: EUR 14,65 Children aged 12 and more: EUR 43,96	

Special allowances for handicapped children	Belgium Yes, « Allocation pour les enfants handicapés jusqu'à l'âge de 21 ans »	France Yes, « Allocation d'éducation spéciale »	Luxembourg Yes « Allocation spéciale supplémentaire »
	<p>Supplementary allowance for handicapped children under the age of 21 with a 66% disability equal per month and per child to: EUR 320,25 if the child obtains 0, 1, 2 or 3 points of autonomy; EUR 350,55 if the child obtains 4, 5 or 6 points of autonomy; EUR 374,74 if the child obtains 7, 8 or 9 points of autonomy.</p>	<p>Special education allowance for persons with a 50% or more handicap, up to 20 years: EUR 109,40 per month. The payment is not subject to a means test.</p> <p>Supplement for children with an incapacity degree of 80% or between 50 - 80% when taken into care by a specialised institution:</p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> category: Impermanent attendance of another person or expenses according to the amount of the supplement: EUR 82,05</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> category: Constant attendance by another person or expenses according to the amount of the supplement: EUR 246,15</p> <p>3<sup>rd</sup> category: Severely disabled in need of continuous and highly qualified assistance, when the only alternative to domiciliary care is a full-time hospital permanence EUR 916,32.</p> <p>The payment of the supplement requires the suspension of working-activities of one parent or the need of a third person.</p>	<p>Supplementary allowance of EUR 168,15 for each child under 18 with an insufficiency or permanent reduction of at least 50% of physical or mental ability by comparison with that of a child of the same age.</p> <p>Maintenance without an age limit if the child is unable to care for itself unless in receipt of a benefit from the national solidarity fund or another social security body.</p>

Beginning of school year allowance	Belgium	France	Luxembourg
	No	Yes, « Allocation de rentrée scolaire »	Yes, « Allocation de rentrée scolaire »
Conditions		Under means test	Each child over 6 years who receive family allowances
Childs' age limit		6 to 18 years	27 years
Annual amount		EUR 249,07 Annual income less than For 1 child : € 15885,04 For 2 children : € 19550,82 Each subsequent child : € 3665,79	Amounts of the allowance per child: For a group of one child: 6 - 11 years: EUR 102,51; 12 years and more: EUR 146,47. For a group of two children (amount per child): 6 - 11 years: EUR 175,77; 12 years and more: EUR 219,67. For a group of three or more children (amount per child): 6 - 11 years: EUR 248,98; 12 years and more: EUR 292,94
Allowance for young child	Belgium No	France Yes, « Allocation pour jeune enfant » (APJE)	Luxembourg
Beneficiary		Pregnant women, Each person who is in charge of a 3 months old child	
Conditions		Payment is subject to a means test related to income, number of children in charge, status (single or couple)	
Duration		“ Short allowance for young child” for pregnant women from the 4 <sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy to the 3 <sup>rd</sup> month after birth “Long allowance for young child” until the 3 <sup>rd</sup> child anniversary	
Child's age limit		3 years	
Amount		EUR 156, 31 per month Possibility to receive differential amount	
Social contribution		0,5 % (CRDS)	
Taxation		No	

	Belgium	France	Luxembourg
Family complement	No	Yes, « Complément familial »	
Beneficiary		Family who have at least 3 children aged 3 or more in charge	
Conditions		Threshold income, same as for APJE Means test	
Duration			
Child's age limit		21 years	
Amount		EUR 141,68 monthly per family. Possibility of differential allowance	
Social contribution		0,5% (CRDS)	
Taxation		No	
	Belgium	France	Luxembourg
Orphan allowance	Yes « Allocation d'orphelin »	Yes, « Allocation de soutien familial » (ASF)	No
Beneficiary	The person entitled to child benefits for a child one or both of whose parents died	The person who is in charge of one or more children deprived of the support of one or both parents The single parent whose child is not acknowledged by one or both parent	
Conditions	-Surviving parent is not married again and do not cohabit (except with family members). -The parent who died was entitled to child benefit for at least 150 days of the 365 days preceding her/his death. see 'allocations familiales' see 'allocations familiales'	Children who are - orphan from one or both parents - not acknowledged by either parent - or whose father or mother do not fulfil the obligation to pay maintenance, based on income.	
Duration			
Child's age limit		20 years	
Net amount	EUR 273,46 With age supplement (see family allowances)	EUR 102,05 per child deprived of the support of both parents, EUR 76,54 per child deprived of the support of one parent	
Social contribution	No	0,5% (CRDS)	
Taxation	No	No	

## **B. Fiscal measures providing financial assistance to the family**

In the three countries, the fiscal legislation takes account of the presence of children in the household.

In the case of Belgium<sup>22</sup>, in order to determine the net amount of taxable resources, family allowances, maternity allowances and legal adoption premiums are deducted and not therefore taxable. Moreover, each child opens the right to a reduction of taxable income, which increases with the status of the child.

In the case of Luxembourg, there has been a reduction of tax for a child in charge<sup>23</sup> since the fiscal reform of 1991. Since that reform came into force, the amount of that reduction has gradually fallen, whilst family allowances were increased accordingly. In 2002, this reduction was fixed at 900 € per annum and per child. It is dealt with in deducting tax, to the extent to which it is due. So only taxable persons whose adjusted taxable income is more than the exempt tariff minimum benefit from a reduction of tax.

Finally, in France, the system of family quotient takes account of the number of persons in charge, and therefore the presence of children in the household. On identical gross income, the amount of tax falls therefore with the number of children. The first and second child opens the right to a fiscal half portion, and following children open the right to a complete portion<sup>24</sup>.

### **§2. Have these measures a direct effect on birth rate?**

Do monetary family policy measures taken without condition as to the activity of the mother have an impact on birth rate? Before answering that question by taking up the results obtained from the literature, it is necessary to define family policy as regards birth rate, and to present the means put forward to implement it.

## **A. Natalist family policy: definition and presentation of the means enabling it to be implemented**

To define a natalist family policy may not be a simple matter: should a positive definition be adopted, or one rather normative? In fact, an analysis of the literature shows that it is the means put forward to implement such a policy, which often allow a definition to be made.

### **1. Definition**

If one wishes to avoid any value judgement, that is to say to adopt a **positive approach**, one would say that a family policy is natalist if it deals with the number of births above that which there would have been without the policy<sup>25</sup>:

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<sup>22</sup> The information given here originates from the Belgian Ministry of Finance.

<sup>23</sup> Here we use the description given by BERGER *et al.* (2002). Other fiscal advantages associated with the presence of children exist. These are the increase of certain deductible expenses and taking into account certain associated with children within the context of the fiscal rebate. The reader may consult the reference quoted above to find the list, which is nonetheless not exhaustive.

<sup>24</sup> Whether the parents are married or not. But if the parent is single, a full portion is attributed to the first child (a half portion to the second, and then a portion for each following child).

<sup>25</sup> This definition was put to us by Jean-Claude Ray on making a careful rereading of this text.

the policy would then be defined in relation to the results obtained.

In fact, when one runs through the literature relating to family policy, one realises that the authors give no true definition of what might correspond to the natalist character of that policy. In fact, when they approach that aspect, the authors are fond in particular of showing the negative macro-social consequences of the fall in birth rate, and they deduce from that an urgency of a policy encouraging births, thus adopting a **normative approach**. So, for example, BICHOT (1993) considers that family policy must be natalist when society benefits from a relatively high birth rate (which is notably the case when there are public retirement schemes, sickness insurance and so on<sup>26</sup>), and that it therefore risks suffering from the non-renewal of generations.

As regards France, according to AFSA (1996), the law on the Family passed in July 1994 should lead to promoting a natalist policy, because it comes before a background of falling birth rates. THELOT *et al.* (1998) consider that it is expected of family policy that it should at least give attention to the renewal of generations. Nonetheless, according to RIGNOLS (1996) and BONNET *et al.* (1999b), such a natalist objective is not clearly posted; it might even be less true from 1994 than in years previous to that. This assessment is valid in particular for the parental education allowance, a family benefit granted in France to parents who do not work full-time, in order that they might better deal with their young child. In fact, from July 1994, the conditions of eligibility for that allowance changed and, in particular, it is henceforth open to parents with a second child, and no longer just those with a third and later child. In this sense, it no longer posts such a clear natalist objective, an objective which in contrast was that of the parental education allowance granted for the third child (CAUSSAT *et al.*, 1994; FAGNANI, 1995a, 1996).

But if there is at present a rather general agreement in France as to the normative position consistent with encouraging births, there is a divergence of opinion as to the means to be employed for this.

## **2. The different means advocated for a natalist family policy**

For its parents the child, we have seen, presents a monetary cost, but also a cost in time. The means advocated by the various authors for family policy to be natalist therefore consist of taking responsibility for part of those costs; they differ in that they do not favour the same type of cost.

a) So, the first means consists of granting **family allowances which reduce the monetary cost** of the child without influencing the activity of the parents. These family allowances may be an identical amount whether the child is first second or whatever (they would thus follow the principle of the right of the child). They might also be targeted at third or later children, as advocated by the classic conception of natalist family policy. Such a policy relies on the hypothesis that the decision to have a first child does not result from an economic calculation; and the objective would thus be to maximise the return from public expenditure, by

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<sup>26</sup> Because the financing of these schemes is based upon an inter-generational solidarity.

targeting it at children the cost of which might cause couples to hesitate. Finally, these family allowances might be granted under condition of resources, or decrease with the income of the family, so as to assist the less well-off families in particular. In all the cases envisaged, it is really the monetary cost of the child for which responsibility would be assumed.

In all three countries that we are interested in, LETABLIER *et al.* (2001) consider that French family policy maintains a pro-birth logic according to the classic definition: not only do family allowances increase with each child (in fact, a first child does not open the right to family allowance), but also, family benefits are generally aimed at the third child. For this reason, EKERT-JAFFE (1986) in classifying European countries (according to her typology), lists France in the group of countries with a clear demographic objective (in contrast to countries that allocate benefits regardless of the rank of the child within the family, thus prioritising children's rights); in this list, Luxembourg and Belgium belong to an intermediary group, since benefits increase with each child although no specific advantage is allocated to any child by the family policy.

b) The second recommended way to establish a pro-birth family policy is to implement **measures that reconcile family life with professional life**, in other words that partially subsidises **the time costs** of a child.

In this way, GLAUDE (1999) suggests that a better reconciliation of family life and professional life will lead to a substantial raise in fertility. CALOT (1992b) goes along, indicating that in societies where family life restrictions are adjusted to those of professional life, fertility remained around the level of generation replacement. AGLIETTA (1999) and MAJNONI D'INTIGNANO (1999) also agrees with this idea. According to the latter, encouraging 3 children and more per family could result in women being excluded from the labour market, and in family poverty. She thus considers that a policy is pro-birth if it "promotes equal access to work for men and women along with a policy of child care provision" (p. 46); and she concludes that "promoting birth rate and confidence in the future involves helping women to enter the labour market". As for AGLIETTA (1999), he claims that a modern pro-birth policy has to be placed in the framework of two-career families, that is, where both parents are free to lead their own professional career. The issue is clearly the reconciliation of work and family life.

Whatever measures are implemented, a family policy is expected to have an impact on fertility. Has this been the case? That is what will be considered under the following point.

#### **B. Impact of family benefits upon fertility: has the drop in a child's monetary costs increased the number of births?**

The framework of this analysis is first presented: a child involves a monetary cost for its parents. The object of this paragraph is to observe whether a rise in fertility results from these costs having been partially taken care of by family policy while not restricting the mother to any professional activity in particular.

Studies found in the literature can be divided into two main categories, according to their methods: some studies are based on the comparison between countries and/or periods with family policies unequally generous towards families with children on a macro-economic level. Other studies opt for a micro-economic view: they model the fertility behaviour of individuals using different factors, one of which is the generosity of family policy. But the impact of this policy is hard to assess since “ factors involved in the evolution of fertility are numerous, delicate to identify and even more to quantify” (AFSA, 1996, p. 7). Let’s go back to these two approaches.

### **1. Macro-economic approach**

With a macro-economic approach, EKERT-JAFFE (1986) compares family policies operating in various countries from 1975 to 1979, with births recorded from 1977-1981: the correlation is very high (0.81), and the author concludes that fertility rates drop slower in countries where family policy is strong. CALOT (1992a) confirms this idea reminding first of all that the baby boom existed in France where family policy was generous but that it was also recorded in the U.S. for example, or in the U.K., although family policies in those countries were relatively restricted. There would therefore appear to be no link between these two facts. However, if CALOT does not come to this conclusion it is because he adds to these observations two pieces of information. On the one hand the rise in fertility in France was noticeably higher than in Anglo-Saxon countries, and, on the other hand, the ensuing drop during the 70’s was less severe. In other words, family policy seems to have an influence on birth rate.

Yet, objections to macro-economic studies between countries can be raised. Situations in countries differ widely and may play an important role in fertility differences. The macro-economic studies comparing successive periods within a same country can also be found wrong because the behaviour of individuals may have evolved in time, although reasons for this evolution may be far from those considered in this analysis. These criticisms have led to attempts at micro-economic models, which consider all other factors to be equal.

### **2. Micro-economic approach**

This approach supposes basically that the decision to plan a **birth is linked to the cost of a child**: parents would decide upon a set amount of their income they can allocate to the child, and birth would be put off as long as the cost of a child remains above this set amount (see for example EKERT-JAFFE, 1986; BLANCHET, 1987; WITTMAN, 1993; EKERT-JAFFE, 1994, 1996; THELOT et al., 1998). Being of a financial nature, family benefits could therefore have an influence upon births, making this cost affordable for families. According to WITTMANN, who conducted a study in Lorraine, a region in France, in 1986, 95 % of births of a second child or more came from parents who had a ‘limit-income’, an expression coined by the author to describe the minimum income allowing them to plan another birth. 21.6 % of these parents would have been influenced by family policy since they were in possession of this ‘limit-income’ thanks to family benefits as a whole.

EKERT-JAFFE (1994) emphasizes however that the cost-birth relationship is not verified in the case of the first child, whose birth does not depend on economic factors<sup>18</sup>. In this way, family policy aimed at all children, including those whose birth would have been planned anyway, namely, the first child, would be less efficient<sup>19</sup>. BLANCHET (1987) shares this point of view: according to this author, parents whose income allocated to another child is already above his/her cost without any state benefit, should not be the prime target of family policy if it is to be efficient. However, in answer to the argument presented by EKERT-JAFFE, it has to be asked whether starting eligibility to family allowances from the first child would not address the issue of making this child's arrival easier, thus lowering the mother's age at birth which would mean an increase (or at least, less decrease) in the final number of children. It also has to be asked, with reference to BLANCHET's argument, whether limiting family allowances only to parents whose income willingly allocated to another child is inferior to its cost, would be politically possible.

In an effort to calculate the extent of impact of family policy upon fertility, GAUTHIER *et al.* (1997)<sup>20</sup> state that family policy could have an impact upon people's final number of children: in the long term, a 25% increase in the amount of family benefits in France would lead to a 4% rise in final number of children (that is to say a rise of 0.07% child per woman in the total fertility rate). So according to the authors, the effect, although very weak, would be certain.

A number of studies have endeavoured to assess the link there is between the level of support in the cost of a child and fertility. For instance, BLANCHET (1987) estimates that in France, were the costs of the third child totally reimbursed, the total fertility rate would rise by one to several tenths of a point (at 1.70 today<sup>21</sup>). This figure is indeed very weak and additionally, would only be obtained by a costly policy. It does, however, confirm the effect a State can have on fertility. Considering a similar measure, total compensation of the cost of a child, although not taking into account its rank, EKERT-JAFFE (1994) foresees a rise of 0.5 children per woman on the total fertility rate, that is to say that every other woman would have extra child. Here, the result seems clearly less negligible; however, it would result from a policy that would be even costlier than the previous one. So the impact of family policy on fertility is potentially substantial, but only with a financial effort far beyond what is currently spent.

With regards to Belgium, the link between the cost of a child and fertility has not been analysed. Recent calculations (VERBIST, 2002) only define how much the cost of a child is compensated by measures of family policy as a whole. It appears that cost compensation increases with the rank of the child within the

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. EKERT-JAFFE (1996), who shows that economic factors barely influence births of the first child, a little more for the second one, but mostly for the third one.

<sup>19</sup> The notion of efficiency relates a particular level of effectiveness to the cost needed to reach this level.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted by THELOT *et al.*

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Eurostat, 2001.

family (the cost being the same for each child<sup>22</sup>, whereas the amounts allocated rise up to the third one, beyond which they stabilise). If we could suppose that a relation between family benefits and birth rate were verified, then these measures might affect fertility. However, such a supposition has not been tested<sup>23</sup>.

Finally, for what concerns the analysis of the link between family policy and fertility, the different authors agree<sup>24</sup> on the results of this policy on fertility: clearly not without effect, they would still be weak and obtained at great cost<sup>25</sup>. That might be the reason for which, as EKERT-JAFFE (1994) emphasizes, “adequacy and effectiveness of policies intended at affecting fertility levels are widely contested” in Europe, even in “a context of low fertility” (p. 132).

The purpose of this first section was to analyse the role of family policy while taking into account that a child involves a monetary expense upon his parents. Financial support is what parents need so that, with these expenses partially covered by the State, they can decide to have another child without a change in their labor supply. Yet, since a drop in fertility is observed, opposing factors must be having a greater effect. The most likely factor is the increase of women’s professional activity, which implicates the cost in time involved and also probably, fertility. These relations will be considered in the next section.

## **Section 2. Fertility has decreased due to a child’s time cost women mostly have to cover, while nowadays, they would rather have a professional activity**

As a standard, time is divided into work- and leisure-time. But defenders of the New Home Economics have demonstrated the value of abandoning this rather crude opposition in favour of a three-way typology: secular work time, domestic work time and leisure time. In fact, reaching a clear analysis of birth planning calls for yet another division within domestic work time: domestic work time that affects all members of the family, and time specifically spent on the child<sup>26</sup> (this time is specific since a child needs looking after and also requires particular care).

This is our supposition: the **decision to have another child** is greatly

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<sup>22</sup> By construction: the modified OECD equivalence scale is used. Therefore, among siblings, the cost of a child is identical, no matter his position.

<sup>23</sup> CATTOIR *et al.* (1997) only attempt to analyse the link there is between income and fertility. But no clear relation appeared, and the authors concluded that income had no substantial effect on the rate of births in Belgium. However, the family benefits were not identified in the income.

<sup>24</sup> In France, only MESSU (1994), a sociologist, disagrees with this opinion. According to him, the results of various studies do not succeed in proving that family benefits have a natalist action. He states that the relation is not of a causal nature, but that family policy is a factor in favour of birth rate that has to be combined with other factors to affect it. If it were not for these other factors (which the author does not explain), the positive relation between public measures of family policy and fertility would disappear. In our opinion however, it appears to be an effect of a causal nature.

<sup>25</sup> But, in the absence of figures on the long-term effects of a drop in fertility, it would seem risky to blame family policy for its weak efficiency: if long-term effects were confirmed, higher expenditures would be justified.

<sup>26</sup> BARRERE-MAURISSON (2001) calls it parental time ; GLORIEUX *et al.* (2002), child time.

determined by the time a mother<sup>27</sup> has at her disposal for that child. This time essentially<sup>28</sup> corresponds to **child time** but can also come from **domestic work time** and from **secular work time**.

Within this framework, a woman has a choice of four options to manage her time budget. The first three options concern a mother who **does not wish to reduce her labor supply below a certain level**, possibly because, her income being quite high, opportunity costs of childcare would be too (cf. SOFER, 1999). She would thus be looking for ways of covering time required for her child, in other words, trying to **reconcile work and family**. In this situation, there are three solutions.

First, she can try to **share tasks**, whether domestic or related to the child, with her partner or other members of the family. Domestic work time and time required for the child will thus be covered by several people on a private level. A mother would therefore no longer bear responsibility alone. And this division could also weaken the negative link there is between fertility and women's activity.

Secondly, a mother can turn for help to charged services, or **childcare charged services** that will cover the time cost required for the child. Here again, her being able to share these costs in time might encourage a mother who wishes to work to have another child, and all the more so if, due to her professional activity, she can afford these services.

Third, a mother can reduce her labor supply and **work part-time**. In this way, she will buy out time she can then spend personally with her child.

All three solutions are measures to reconcile family life and professional life. In the first paragraph of this section we will see how uneasy it is to reconcile them, since work and family seem to be in part incompatible items. We will then turn to what has been written on this and see whether these three options we mentioned above, allow a professional activity while not resulting in a drop in fertility. This will be considered in the second paragraph.

As for the fourth option, it would mean the mother having to **give up her professional activity**, and spend the time she will thus gain with her child. Since the activity-fertility relation is a negative one, fertility would then rise. This solution though could be viewed as a failure in the reconciliation process. We will examine this possibility in the third paragraph.

For each of these four possible solutions, we will look into family policy and see whether it can have a **direct** or **indirect** (influencing fertility through

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<sup>27</sup> As a reminder, our focus is on mothers and specifically time they have at their disposal since, as many authors state, the responsibility of reconciling family and work life is unequally shared within a couple, and is mainly carried by women (cf. for example RENAUDAT *et al.*, 1995; JUNTER-LOISEAU, 1996; SOFER, 1999; MAJNONI D'INTIGNANO, 1999; ALBISER, 1999; GLAUDE, 1999). According to MAJNONI D'INTIGNANO, "costs in time and in professional opportunity losses rest on women on a private level. No society, as equalitarian as it may be, has ever managed to oblige men to share them within the family" (p. 50).

<sup>28</sup> Essentially means not exclusively. A mother can indeed reduce her leisure time to spend it with her child. Yet, as is emphasised by BARRERE-MAURISSON (2001), leisure time mothers have at their disposal is perceptibly low. Were it totally cancelled, they would therefore not gain much additional time to spend with their child.

labor supply) **impact on fertility**.

### **§1. Difficult reconciliation of work and family**

Due to their frequent negative correlation, work and family have always seemed to be incompatible items, although determining whose influence is the strongest has not been easy. But reconciliation, which we will attempt to define later, could thwart this link.

#### **A. Apparent frequency of incompatibility between work and family**

What is the direction of the causal relation that exists between work and family? On the whole, the link between fertility and female labor supply is often acknowledged in various studies, while it has never actually been proven or questioned, as noted by HANTRAIS (1992). Still, some authors do analyse it specifically.

In DESPLANQUES' (1994) opinion for instance, the **negative correlation** observed in France between professional activity and fertility (which, in itself, gives no idea of the causal direction between both elements) could be **questioned** by the comparison of European levels of women's activity and the total fertility rate. In fact, countries where fertility is the highest are not necessarily those where women's activity is the lowest. As for VERON (1998), he views as non-existent the link between women's activity and fertility. His result is based on statements according to which, the rate of women's professional activity has constantly increased, regardless of the number of children.

Some authors still suggest a relation between both elements. Their conclusion as to its direction differs each time.

#### **1. Fertility slows down professional activity**

A number of authors hold that **fertility has an impact on activity**. This is the case in Luxembourg, according to LEJEALLE (1997a) and AUBRUN (1998). LEJEALLE notes that some women permanently give up their professional activity because of having just had a child, while others have not yet started working because of their desire to have children and take care of them. Additionally, AUBRUN observes that almost 40% of working women who have just had a child would like a break from work for a while at least.

In Belgium, women in 30% of cases chose part-time work because of having children (and in another 25%<sup>29</sup>, for other family reasons).

A relation of similar direction is shown by BOURREAU-DUBOIS *et al.* (2001) for France. According to their count, over a third of the women who choose a part-time activity<sup>30</sup>, do so for family reasons. GALTIER (1999a; 1999b)

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<sup>29</sup> The same is observed in 3.5 to 14.5% of the men. These figures come from a study called 'Enquête sur les Forces de Travail' conducted by 'L'Institut National des Statistiques' in the first half of 2001.

<sup>30</sup> A relation of similar direction seems to be indicated by results of a survey conducted in France by CREDOC (1998), according to which, 51% of the French think that the birth of a child involves a compulsory decrease in the mother's professional activity (16% of the French agree with this opinion), or even a cessation, temporary or not, of activity (35% of the people interviewed agreed).

also concludes to a fertility – activity causal relationship when she states that the presence of young children increases the chances of resorting to part-time activity, and only in the case of women.

Conversely, an impact of opposite direction is presented by other authors.

## **2. Professional activity limits fertility**

BLANCHET (1992), whose study is prior to most of those just mentioned, categorically refutes **the idea of no relation between women's activity and fertility**. Although recognising there is no definite link between both elements, he highlights **factors of incompatibility** between activity and fertility. He admits that the causal relation is not unidirectional, but offers to **favour the impact activity has on fertility**, because more and more women are choosing to favour work: with women's professional activity on the increase, fertility would drop since both are, to a certain extent (particularly from the third child on), incompatible. In a subsequent study, BLANCHET *et al.* (1996) confirm the existence of these factors of partial incompatibility between work and family, leading some women, whose professional activity is growing, to reduce their fertility, although others do not.

In MAJNONI D'INTIGNANO's opinion (1999), three successive stages of the link between women's professional activity and fertility are observed throughout history, and the first two confirm the existence of a correlation between both elements. First, fertility is high while activity is low; this is the traditional stage. Then comes a transition stage, when activity increases and fertility drops. Finally, the modern stage would permit fertility to stabilise, and even increase again, while activity remains high. This third stage would contradict any idea of negative correlation, and to a certain extent<sup>31</sup>, be in opposition with BLANCHET's point of view. It concurs however with views held by some other authors, EKERT-JAFFE (1994) and FOUQUET *et al.* (1999). In EKERT-JAFFE's opinion, public measures aimed at compensating the cost of a child or covering the time it requires could indeed limit the negative effect women's activity has on fertility. And FOUQUET *et al.* (1999), on the other hand, suggest that reducing tensions between professional activity, the norm for women, and fertility can, on its own, prevent birth postponement, and even a drop in fertility. Concluding on this third stage, MAJNONI D'INTIGNANO (1999) states that only countries that help women reconcile family life and professional life have enough children to balance their demographic structure.

Finally, taking into account the **relation between women's professional activity and fertility** would thus incite the conclusion that it is now necessary (for countries that wish to be in the third stage) **to allow reconciliation between family life and professional life**, a reconciliation that can be attained with the help of family policy<sup>32</sup>, and will allow high activity to coexist with rising fertility. And that was what we had supposed from the outset, that is, to attribute to family policies a neutralising effect (at least partially) on the negative impact

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<sup>31</sup> Only to a certain extent since BLANCHET explains that incompatibility factors are only partial.

<sup>32</sup> According to THEVENON (1999), family-work reconciliation has become a clear objective of French family policy.

professional activity has on fertility.

## **B. Definition and reflection on the notion of reconciliation**

**Reconciliation of family life and professional work** (expression sometimes shortened into work-family reconciliation) now has to be **defined**. It has to be noted that, in most cases, this notion is not defined but is used without any reflection on the matter. As FRISQUE (1997) states, such an attitude means taking for granted domestic and family responsibilities women carry, and therefore it is up to women to reconcile them with a professional activity with no notion of any sharing of responsibilities.

In his 1996 article, JUNTER-LOISEAU proceeds to define the expression reconciliation, replacing it in all three contexts it may be used<sup>33</sup>. From these definitions the idea that work and family, the apparent conflicting items in our discussion, could coexist harmoniously stands out. Reconciliation would therefore be a virtuous concept. This image could, however, be misleading for two reasons. For one thing, reconciliation could be a cause for tensions between parents (FAGNANI *et al.*, 2001). Being a substitute for a sharing out of family responsibilities within a couple (JUNTER-LOISEAU, 1996), although viewed preferably as an instrument for peace in a state of conflicting logics, it would only be a makeshift solution. Secondly, despite its apparent harmonious effect, this notion will in no way do away with antagonisms between work and family (JUNTER-LOISEAU, 1996). These antagonisms in turn, could lead mothers, willingly or not, to have to choose one or the other, whereas the very notion of reconciliation carries the idea of a unique representation of work and family (which should be reconciled, since it can be done). This misleading notion perhaps caused LETABLIER *et al.* (2000, 2001) to use the expression “articulation” instead. For our part, we will continue using ‘reconciliation’ in the course of this study.

According to JUNTER-LOISEAU, interest in this notion of reconciliation is consistent with the view that women’s activity is no longer questioned, this also being the case for the issue of fertility in particular. This interest could take on significant importance in the medium-term, with dwindling prospects of labor supply in Europe.

Also to be emphasized, according to LETABLIER *et al.* (2001), is the fact that implementation of a work-family reconciliation policy can be governed by various state action principles. The first of these principles meets a need for collective socialisation of children, and demographic requirements. France is mostly governed by this principle, and so is Belgium. In compliance with this principle, authorities maintain neutrality with respect to the various forms of family life, thus providing families with freedom of choice on the issues of professional activity and childcare. The second principle corresponds to an effort of family socialisation of children. Luxembourg<sup>34</sup> would have opted for this.

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<sup>33</sup> The definitions are as follows: in its first sense, to reconcile means to restore harmony; in a legal sense, to reconcile is a way of solving situations of conflict; finally, reconciliation can also be the result of an action aimed at making opposing items compatible.

<sup>34</sup> According to this author, Austria, Germany and the Netherlands would also belong to this group.

Consequently, the way responsibilities are shared within a couple would be institutionalised, but domestic work recognised (both by the availability of social benefits and by what could be described as a maternal income, since the purpose of this allowance is to allow the child to be taken care of, regardless of any prior professional activity)

After presenting the relation there is between professional activity and fertility, as well as what is involved in the notion of reconciliation, the three options women with the responsibility of a small child can opt for, can now be considered. The purpose of these options would be reconciliation of work and family.

## **§2. Ways of reconciling work and family**

To reconcile work and family, a mother is faced with three possible solutions: sharing the time a child requires with her partner or relatives, with a person paid for looking after the child or reducing her work time to be more present herself. In this paragraph, measures taken by states in favour of work-family reconciliation and the extent to which family policy can, in one way or another, improve conciliation of family life and professional life are examined.

### **A. Sharing responsibilities within the couple or even among relatives could theoretically allow a mother to carry on her professional activity without a change, while having the same number of children**

To start with, the object of this first point consists of explaining in a synthetic way, the different measures taken by Belgium, France and Luxembourg that are aimed at inciting couples, and in a wider way, families to share parental and domestic tasks, and thus, allowing mothers to bear as many children as they wish, while continuing their professional activity. The possible impact of the way tasks are shared upon fertility is considered later.

#### **1. Do official measures aimed at encouraging a sharing out of tasks exist?**

The European Union Council of Ministers of labour and social policy took a resolution on 29 June 2000 that recommends equal opportunities within a couple, suggesting that both members of the couple divide their time more equally among activities, and that activities themselves be better divided within the couple. According to MEDA (2001), the purpose of this resolution is to help women to integrate the labour market and men to participate in family life. Both issues, work and family, are thus linked. FAGNANI (2001) agrees with this view reminding that what is at stake in today's family policy is to include fathers in the issue of reconciliation.

Obviously, on a European level, these are more intentions than concrete measures. These family policy measures can indeed be considered as incentives to share tasks within a couple, although they had not been specifically intended as such. Family – work reconciliation measures are aimed at both parents, which means, they are not disincentives to share time required for children, as in the case of measures focused solely on mothers. In fact, they consist of parental leave, and more specifically in France, paternity leave, implemented in January 2002, an

incentive to share parental tasks. Since sharing out tasks is done on a private level though, these measures are limited to an incentive action only. Still, one is entitled to imagine (until verified) they do, in effect, incite to share, thus resulting in work – family reconciliation.

## **2. Does sharing tasks have an impact on fertility?**

Before analysing to what extent sharing tasks within the couple, or possibly among relatives, has upon fertility, it would be pertinent to paint a clear picture of what is actually involved in sharing out tasks.

### *a) Extent to which tasks are shared out within the couple or among relatives*

Tasks can be shared out within the couple or among relatives equally. Our research focuses on to what degree it exists in both cases.

#### *- Sharing tasks within the couple*

Sharing tasks within the couple appears to be the most natural, since it is considered that the decision to have another child is made by both in the couple, and not by the woman alone.

According to figures from the ‘Emploi du Temps’ survey, conducted in France in 1998, women who live as part of a couple<sup>35</sup> take care of two thirds of domestic work (BROUSSE, 1999, FERMANIAN, 1999), and even of 80% of basic domestic production<sup>36</sup> (GLAUDE, 1999). This figure increases if the woman does not have a job<sup>37</sup>, and even more with a growing number of children and all the more if they are under three years of age<sup>38</sup>. BARRERE-MAURISSON (2001) who, in her survey, makes a distinction between parental time and domestic work time, confirms that a woman’s not having a job increases chances of an unequal share of time spent on children. The same cannot be said when mothers work part-time. In that case, they take care of 60% of parental tasks, which amounts to a figure similar (59.4%) to that of mothers working full-time.

From these results, it can be said that **an increase in family responsibilities only makes the sharing out of tasks within the couple more unequal**, and BROUSSE suggests that this could be due to the fact that both parents’ professional work time evolves differently with the arrival of children. The mother’s would decrease, while the father’s would rise in identical proportions<sup>39</sup>. GLAUDE (1999) indicates however that a trend towards rebalancing has been observed in the past thirty years, with working men taking

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<sup>35</sup> Only working couples.

<sup>36</sup> This includes shopping, cooking, washing-up and physical care of children. From the point of view of our study then, these are included in both domestic tasks and tasks specifically aimed at children.

<sup>37</sup> Yet, according to FRISQUE (1997), if a woman works, tasks do not seem to be shared out more equally. The total amount of time spent on household chores would appear to decrease.

<sup>38</sup> When the family counts two children, the father’s share decreases by 10%. It drops by 14% if one of the children is under three.

<sup>39</sup> On this subject, GLAUDE (1999), SOFER (1999) and FERMANIAN (1999) observe that activity behaviour within a couple presents similarities between partners, indicating a shared taste for effort (FERMANIAN calls it a dragging effect). But these similarities disappear with the presence of young children with partners becoming complementary.

on a more active part in household duties (35% instead of 32%), while working women still do as much, and non-working women a little less. Having said that, evolution still appears small. The 1992 'Emploi du Temps' study for instance showed women did three to four times more for children than men (RENAUDAT *et al.*, 1995). Between 1992 and 1998, the situation evolved very little. And this is confirmed by BIHR *et al.* (2000) when they state that time spent by both partners on domestic work and on children has evolved very little between 1986 and 1999. Women would thus spend four minutes less per day on domestic work and men six extra minutes. Time set aside for children would remain unevenly spread, with figures for 1999 at one hour per day for working women (two hours for non-working women) and at twenty minutes per day for men. One point of interest is that the dividing of tasks appears to be related to power: the partner with the most cultural and/or economical advantages would appear to take over (GLAUDE, 1999).

Luxembourg does not have its own 'Emploi du Temps' survey, but a survey conducted in 1993 provides information on how tasks are shared out within the couple<sup>40</sup> (LEJEALLE, 1997a). These questions were only put to working women, part of a couple (1,450 women), who indicated the amount of participation their partners had in the various duties. As is the case in France, it appears that **help provided by the partner drops with the presence of children**: almost every other partner takes no part at all or very rarely in basic domestic tasks (and up to 90% of partners when it comes to cooking and laundry). These figures drop to 30% in the absence of children. Another survey conducted on only part of working women (private employees in Luxembourg), provides similar information. It indicates that almost 50% of partners have a rate of participation of only 20 to 40% in family work (HAUSMAN *et al.* 1996).

In Belgium, as in both other countries, duties are unequally shared within the couple: women cover two thirds<sup>41</sup> of domestic work and child-time (cf. GLORIEUX *et al.*, 2002), whether they work or not (VAN DONGEN *et al.*, 1995). On the other hand, their situation is different from French women when it comes to their partner's participation in child-time, which rises slightly, instead of dropping, in the presence of a young child in the household (the age limit used in this study was of 7, in contrast with the French study, where the figure was at 3): while a father's share in domestic duties drops somewhat (he takes care of 32% of tasks when there is a young child in the household, against 35% when there is none), he spends more time with children (he shoulders 32% of responsibilities in the presence of a young child, in contrast with 19% when children are older). His share however is not related to the number of children.

What can be concluded when it comes to sharing duties within the couple? On the one hand, it explains why many authors claim that responsibility for reconciliation rests upon women: by definition, to reconcile various activities, one has to be responsible for them, and women are in this situation more often than

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<sup>40</sup> These questions were put to a panel of Luxembourg households, the PSELL, panel that is renewed on a yearly basis, but questions of which can change at the margin. This was the case in 1993, the only year questions were asked on the subject of time management.

<sup>41</sup> This figure accounts for the Flanders exclusively.

men. On the other hand, this division is clearly unequal, no matter how many children there are. In other words, it would appear that, for these women, sharing out tasks is not a determining factor in the decision to have a (or another) child, that is to say the visible imbalance does not prevent the birth of a child. Aside from them, other women might feel urged not to have another child because tasks are not shared and they do not wish to reduce their labor supply.

*- Sharing tasks among relatives*

Sharing tasks among relatives should not be considered on the same level as that which is done (or could be) within the couple. In fact, various members of the family, grandparents in particular, may reside such a distance away that sharing tasks would be impossible to plan. What is more, although legitimate, since it is directed to their children, their help does not appear to be on the same level as that of the partner, their family ties with the young child being more distant. However, sharing tasks among relatives does occur and can even be encouraged by the fact that people become grandparents at a younger age: according to CASSAN *et al.* (2001), in France, half of 56 year olds are grandparents. Yet figures concerning help given by relatives are seldom. All that is known is that, in Eastern France, parents will often call upon a relative, generally the grandmother, to take care of children (DESPLANQUES, 1994; DELL'ERA, 1996). Resorting to this kind of care is naturally facilitated when grandparents reside in the same household (JEANDIDIER, 1994). According to ALIAGA *et al.* (2000), this free support provided by relatives has been very common and stable since 1996. It represents 40% of the total amount of childcare hours.

When it comes to Luxembourg, 45% of the young children were looked after by a relative or by one of the parents helped by a paid person<sup>42</sup> (LEJEALLE *et al.*, 1999). 25% of the women interviewed were also seen receiving help from relatives in caring for household duties (AUBRUN *et al.*, 1996).

In the case of Belgium, grandparents play an important role in caring for children, particularly when they reach schooling age but need looking after outside school hours. A survey conducted in Flanders, a region of Belgium, shows that children between the ages of 2.5 and 12 are regularly looked after by their grandparents. Almost 50% of children who attend school all day are in this situation, although this kind of care is not necessarily exclusive (VANPEE *et al.*, 2000).

*b) Does sharing tasks within the couple and among relatives have any direct impact upon fertility?*

To our knowledge, studies concluding to a direct link between sharing tasks within the couple or among relatives and fertility are just about non-existent. Hence, SCHULZE (2000) only suggests there is a link, stating that if women wish to have a professional activity while men provide no help in family duties, fertility rates are likely to be low, and conversely. On the basis of interviews with around

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<sup>42</sup> It has to be noted that these figures come from a survey conducted on women employed in the private sector, that is, working women.

thirty women from Luxembourg<sup>43</sup>, LEJEALLE (2001b) for her part, observes that traditional views on the role of men and women have been modified, and this change has led births to be planned, and even put on hold, as parents only wish to bear children if favourable conditions are combined, on a financial level but also in the amount of time available for it. Changes in mentalities and in roles within the couple would thus appear to have an impact on fertility.

Those are the only studies we found on the subject of the relation there is between sharing tasks and fertility. They only conclude to a link that is supposed, and in no way verified.

*c) Can sharing duties within the couple influence fertility, making labor supply easier for mothers?*

As a reminder, this question is based on the supposition developed previously, according to which an increase in labor supply would affect fertility in a negative way, unless family policy assists in reconciling work and family, thus thwarting that negative effect. This supposition in mind, we will be looking into available literature to see whether sharing duties within the couple and, more generally among relatives, affects women's labor supply. It has to be noted though, that studies on the subject of the link between sharing tasks and female labor supply are extremely rare in each of the three countries in question.

For Luxembourg, LEJEALLE *et al.* (1999) observe that, on the one hand, in families where both parents work, 45% of the children are looked after by relatives, and on the other hand, in the event of sickness, 51.5% of the children are looked after by relatives, while another 19%, by the partner<sup>44</sup>. Based on both results, authors conclude that these various ways of having people other than the mother look after the children allow her to be professionally active. From more recent figures (1998) that concern the entire population residing in Luxembourg, LEJEALLE (2001a) states that tasks unequally shared, due to widely accepted traditional views on task division within the couple, account, to a certain extent at least, for the low level of women's activity. It has to be noted though, that 40% of the women interviewed regard domestic chores as their duty. Unfair sharing is thus not only caused by men who refuse to take an active role in family and domestic life.

A comparable link is observed in France by JEANDIDIER *et al.* (2002). From data collected in the Lorraine region only, authors conclude that a woman's time for professional activity rises when her partner works part-time at the most, and can thus take care of children and perhaps of domestic tasks.

It would therefore appear that the scarce available information on this matter leads to comparable conclusions in two of the countries under consideration. When duties are evenly shared out within the couple, or when family and domestic tasks are taken care of by relatives, the mother can increase her professional activity. This rise will likely result in a subsequent drop in

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<sup>43</sup> Since these results come from a quality survey conducted on around thirty women from Luxembourg, it is impossible to present figures, and actually, the author does not attempt to. Even so, they do appear to us as an indication of a trend.

<sup>44</sup> Only children of parents employed in the private sector are included (study conducted in 1995).

fertility, following the afore mentioned relation between fertility and professional activity.

It could have been thought that task sharing would not influence female labor force participation, while helping fertility to increase. With time needed to care for a child distributed among a number of people, and not on the mother alone, this sharing out could have permitted a child to be planned without any change in the mother's labor supply. And yet, this result does not stand out from available literature, although admittedly sparse. Maybe this is due to the fact that the rate of female labor supply remains lower than what may be achieved without any time restraints, and women thus use all the time they can spare to increase their professional activity. In this way, results could possibly change, as soon as the desired level of time for professional activity is attained. Our supposition, the neutralising effect of sharing duties upon the negative relation between work and fertility could then be tested.

Sharing out duties within the couple or even among relatives is the first option a mother can choose if she does not desire her labor supply to be affected. The time responsibility of another child would, in this way, not all rest on her. A second possibility would be turning to paid services that would take care of the child.

#### **B. A market solution for mothers wishing to continue their professional activity: paid childcare services**

**Paid child care services**, a measure aimed at reconciling professional life and family life, could reach **five goals**. First of all, being a reconciliation measure, it should allow women to remain on the labour market without a drop in fertility (JENSON *et al.*, 1997; MAJNONI D'INTIGNANO, 1999). Additionally, it would lead to equal opportunities for men and women (DAUNE-RICHARD, 1999; MAJNONI D'INTIGNANO, 2000). In France<sup>45</sup>, it would also meet the need for free choice in childcare methods (THELOT *et al.*, 1998; BOYER, 1999). It should also help to develop proximity employment. It therefore comes under family policy and work policy (HANTRAIS *et al.*, 1995; RIGNOLS, 1996; THELOT *et al.*, 1998; MAJNONI D'INTIGNANO, 2000; BORSENBERGER *et al.*, 2001; BARRERE-MAURISSON, 2001; FAGNANI *et al.*, 2001). Finally, since it would result in a mixing of different social spheres, it would also reach the goal of equal opportunities for children<sup>46</sup> (DAUNE RICHARD, 1999; LETABLIER *et al.*, 2001<sup>47</sup>). We will particularly look into the first of these five objectives in the course of this study.

As a reminder, this is what we suppose: a paid person caring for children would allow a mother who does not wish to reduce the time she spends on her

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<sup>45</sup> Studies on this subject are essentially conducted in France, but they appear to us as representative of other countries than France alone.

<sup>46</sup> This success would only be relative since, in France, costs for the various childcare methods may vary to a great extent, and as a result, children are less likely to mix with those of different backgrounds (THELOT *et al.*, 1998).

<sup>47</sup> In LETABLIER's view, this conception goes back to the Third Republic (the Regime in France from 1875 until 1940).

professional activity to relieve herself of part of the time demanded by a little child. The mother would thus not be lead to consider giving up on birth or even putting it off. In this way, family policy measures in favour of childcare, and thus, in favour of work-family reconciliation could thwart the negative relation there is between professional activity and fertility.

A closer look at what has been written on this subject in the three countries in question will tell us about **the real relation there is between public measures in favour of child care and fertility**. We will also see whether these measures incite parents to plan another child, leaving the mother free to choose to continue her professional activity while bearing as many children as she wishes. Since childcare measures are aimed at family life and professional life reconciliation, they would necessarily be set in the framework of working women<sup>48</sup> (they would also depend on a mother's choice of activity). In favour of professional activity, they can have an indirect influence upon fertility. In other words, it seems to us that the impact of these measures upon fertility has to be of an indirect nature, involving a mother's work possibilities. This paragraph begins with an overview of State measures in favour of childcare.

### **1. Public measures in favour of child care for working women**

Tax measures are in operation in all three countries together with measures in kind. In France, family benefits also apply. Public measures are now listed.

In Belgium, childcare expenses, in the case of a child under the age of three, are tax deductible, as long as the taxpayer receives a professional income.

In Luxembourg, tax relief is allowed for childcare expenses, whether the child is cared for at home or in a crèche. The child has to be less than 14 years of age to be eligible for this tax relief, unless it is disabled. On 1<sup>st</sup> January 2002, the maximum allowance per family was of € 3,569.67<sup>49</sup>. A measure in kind is added to this tax measure, making the price covered by parents for their children to be cared for in a crèche relative to their income.

In France, there are two kinds of family benefits, Allowance for childcare at home (Allocation pour la Garde d'enfant à domicile, AGED) and Family allowance for employment of an approved maternal helper (Aide à la famille pour l'emploi d'une assistante maternelle agréée, AFEAMA). It is also possible to deduct expenses incurred for childcare from income tax.

When it comes to *family benefits*, the allowance for child care at home (AGED) is only paid to the person or the couple in which both partners have a minimum professional activity and who employ one or several people to care for a child cared for at home, as long as it is under the age of 6. Part of the social contributions is covered, and this part varies according to the child's age and to household income.

The Family allowance for employment of an approved maternal helper (AFEAMA) is allocated to the household or person alone who employs an

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<sup>48</sup> Obviously, some non-working women may also at times resort to paid child-care. The issue however is not the same as that which we are interested in here, since the question for these mothers is not to reconcile work and family.

<sup>49</sup> This ceiling has greatly risen since 1999, partly to curb the tide of illegal work.

approved maternal helper to take care of a child under the age of 6. All social and employer's contributions involved in employing an approved maternal helper are directly covered by family allowance. This support is related to the age of the child and to the parents' income. When the child is under the age of three, the minimum allowance is of € 130. - but can reach almost € 200. if the parents' income is below a certain level.

As for *tax measures*, they consist of a tax reduction equal to 25% of the sums paid to a crèche, a day nursery or an approved maternal helper, amounts limited to € 2,300. - per child and per year (in other words, the maximum tax reduction can never exceed € 575. - per child and per year). If the childcare system chosen by parents is care within the home, tax reductions rise to 50% of the sums paid, and these are limited to € 6,900. - per year. The maximum tax reductions thus amount to € 3,450. - per year.

As is the case in Luxembourg, other childcare benefits are available in France, relating the amounts paid by parents whose children are cared for in crèches to their income and to the number of children in care. Moreover, crèches are subsidized by the Family Allowance Office.

Measures relating to childcare family policy are described in the following tables.

	Belgium	France	Luxembourg
<b>Allowance for home care child</b>	No	Yes, <b>Allocation de garde d'enfant à domicile (AGED)</b>	
<b>Conditions</b>		People who have a professional activity and employ a nurse at home for child care.	
<b>Duration</b>			
<b>Child's age limit</b>		6 years	
<b>Amount</b>		<p>75% of the social contributions with a ceiling amount related to the income level:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 75% of the social contributions with a ceiling amount of € 1524,03 per quarter if the net yearly household income doesn't exceed € 34196,91.</li> <li>2. 50% of the social contributions with a ceiling amount of € 1016,23 per quarter if the net yearly household income exceed € 34196,91.</li> </ol> <p>- For children aged between 3 and 6 years, EUR 507,81 per quarter, without income threshold</p>	
<b>Social contribution</b>		No	
<b>Taxation</b>		No	

Note

France : Tax reduction of Maximum EUR 3450, (EUR 6900 in case of a handicapped child) for people who employ a nurse for home care child.

	Belgium	France	Luxembourg
<b>Family support for employment of a chartered nursery assistant</b>	No	Yes, « Aide à la famille pour l'emploi d'une assistante maternelle agréée (AFEAMA)	No
<b>Beneficiary</b>		Everyone whose child is under 6 years and whose nurse is chartered and has no family relationship with the employer. Social contribution of the nursery's salary are paid by the family allowance organisation.	
<b>Conditions</b>			
<b>Child's age limit</b>		6 years	
<b>Amount</b>		Maximum nursery salary amount EUR 33,35 per day and per child. The amount of the allowance can not exceed 85% of the nursery net paid wage.	

In the point of view of THELOT *et al.*, (1998), promoting child care by services outside the family circle is one of the objectives of French family policy, and this has been the case from the mid 1980's. Since then, many public measures have been taken, and some 100,000 crèche spots have been set up since 1980. According to these authors, increase in the offer of childcare services has paralleled the rise in demand, itself related to a growth in women's activity and has also reduced the development of illegal work. Furthermore, this measure is in the framework of a search for equal opportunities for men and women.

The 1997 Conference on Family confirmed this trend in family policy. Developing family services has been defined as one of the great principles in favour of work-family reconciliation (BARRERE-MAURISSON, 2001).

Various measures have been taken to support service jobs, the purpose of which is both to allow mothers the opportunity to work while their child is young and needs looking after, and to create proximity jobs<sup>50</sup>. With the creation of these new jobs, high demand had to be maintained. Consequently, attractive financial measures have been taken (through family policy measures as described previously), and management of these services has also been simplified (in the form of service-job vouchers). In parallel, the offer of childcare services has been widened, and their control reinforced. An effort has also been undertaken to make home workers more professional, by creating specific professional training courses for these occupations (BARRERE-MAURISSON, 2001).

THELOT *et al.*, (1998) underscores that, apart from care centres for little children, measures in favour of childcare also relate to places in kindergarten school for those a little older. On this point, France and Belgium are in a very similar situation since, in both countries, all children over three years of age are in school, and this is also the case for half of children above the age of two.

The offer of care services seems to have developed because of the existing demand but this demand has been maintained and even reinforced, financially on the one hand, and by the increased quality of services offered. Since we are in the framework of services provided to little children, the latter feature could be essential in explaining the boom in demand for such services. This fact is actually confirmed by AUBRUN *et al.* (1999), in the case of Luxembourg. In an interview, around thirty women from Luxembourg stated their limited confidence in day nursery centres. Authors have thus suggested reinforcing their quality.

## **2. Do public measures aimed at work-family reconciliation by childcare support have an indirect impact on fertility?**

In Luxembourg, as we have seen, the offer of care services is low. It might appear tempting to attribute this situation to the high level of non-working women. LEJEALLE (2001a) actually suggests this when she states that difficulties in finding childcare are one of the reasons for low activity in Luxembourg.

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<sup>50</sup> This author adds that, since this offer of childcare services also supports an objective of job creation, systems of individual childcare, such as resorting to approved maternal helpers, receive better financial support from public measures than systems of collective childcare. This, in turn, would result in a clear cut with the Republican ideal of equal opportunities for children (JENSON *et al.*, 1997; THELOT *et al.*, 1998; LETABLIER *et al.*, 2001).

AUBRUN *et al.* (1999), analysing results of a study conducted on women from Luxembourg, share this view and indicates that the scarcity of child care structures and of tax deductions for child care expenses seem to influence adversely women's activity<sup>51</sup>. It stands out from this latter study that some women retired from the labour market because they were not willing to entrust their child with anyone else but a relative (BORSENERGER *et al.*, 2000). It would therefore seem that the low offer of childcare services could not always be called upon to explain the low participation of women in the labour market.

We will admit the first relation for the sake of discussion, although the cause-effect link has not been clearly demonstrated. Scarcity of childcare services in Luxembourg would lead women to abandon the labour market with the responsibility of a young child. With a decrease in professional activity, a rise in fertility would logically be expected. And yet, such an effect has not been clearly demonstrated neither, the total fertility rate of Luxembourg not being particularly higher than in any of the two neighbouring countries, although the level of professional activity for women in those countries is higher.

In the case of France, RIGNOLS (1996) underlines that developing childcare systems should clearly have a positive impact on birth rates. Indeed, with opting between work and family no longer necessary, parents no longer have to put off birth (also reducing the effect upon the final number of children of women), or even cancel it either. What is expected from these public measures is for them to have a definite neutralising effect upon the negative relation there is between professional activity and fertility.

The few studies on the situation in France prove the positive link there is between public measures in favour of childcare and women's professional activity. This link is the consequence of a drop in costs of professional activity (GUILLOT *et al.*, 1996; LANOT *et al.*, 1997; ALLAIN *et al.*, 1999). On this subject, JEANDIDIER (1994) underscores the importance of kindergarten, since early schooling appears to allow mothers to resume their professional activity<sup>52</sup>. And a rise in the total fertility rate in France has been observed in the past few years (1999, 2000 and 2001), although it has not been accompanied by a drop in women's activity<sup>53</sup>. Measures in favour of childcare may have contributed to a growth in compatibility between professional activity and fertility.

Finally, for what concerns Belgium, studies of the possible link between the offer of childcare and fertility are all but non-existent. The only indications come from a single study (DEHAES *et al.*, 1999) conducted in Flanders in 1997. It deal with a proposition to allow only children over the age of three to attend school.

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<sup>51</sup> These results come from a qualitative survey conducted upon only around thirty women. In view of the low number of people interviewed, no quantity results are available.

<sup>52</sup> These results come from a comparison between Lorraine, a region in France, and Luxembourg, where kindergarten attendance is generally delayed. On the date of survey, 13% of French children below the age of three went to school, whereas this figure dropped to 5% in the case children of the same age from Luxembourg.

<sup>53</sup> Except in the particular case of mothers of two children, the youngest of which is under three, since mothers are then eligible for a family benefit, the Parental allowance for education (Allocation parentale d'éducation, APE), which can only be coupled to a part-time activity at the most. Though, this only concerns a section of women.

Among the 70 experts who were interviewed on the consequences of such a measure, 83% of them forecasted complications in work and family reconciliation. And 24% of them estimated that this action would lead to possible births being deferred, or even (for 6% of them) reduced. A relation of a positive nature between the offer of childcare services and fertility can be deduced from these figures.

For women desiring to pursue their full-time professional activity, resorting to public child care services may be an option to consider in order to relieve them partly of the time required to take care of a little child. Another possibility to find this necessary time would actually consist of accepting a reduction in time affected to this professional activity. This solution will be considered in the following paragraph.

### **C. Choosing part-time work may allow a mother to care for her children while staying at work, and thus perhaps may favour fertility**

The decision to plan another child is related to the time cost involved in this child. This time cost may be covered to a certain extent by others (the partner, relatives or someone outside the family circle). But the same can be said about the working-mother herself if she accepts to reduce time on her professional activity. The question under consideration here is the choice some women make to **work part-time**. This choice constitutes a way to **reconcile work with family**. The various authors often insist on this feature of part-time work, which distinguishes it from total withdrawal from the labour market, but also underline sometimes that this flattering image may conceal other characteristics of part time work.

We will start by presenting the way part time work is considered in the framework of work-family conciliation. Next, we will turn our attention to various measures aimed at alleviating costs in time spent with the child for the working-mother, and then, on the link there might exist between these measures<sup>54</sup> and fertility. In view of the very nature of these measures, which reduce the cost of a decrease in activity and therefore favour it, this link would appear to be only of an indirect nature. The decrease in activity should indeed cause a fertility increase. As a result, the effect family policies have in thwarting the negative relation between professional activity and fertility is here not the object of our search. Rather it is a positive link of an indirect nature we are looking for.

#### **1. Part-time work does appear to be a measure of work-family reconciliation, although its appeal is often questioned**

In the view of THELOT *et al.* (1998), developing part-time work is a definite **conciliation measure**, the benefits of which would be particularly felt by a certain category of mothers: those with three children or more. These authors actually highlight the parallel rise of these mothers'<sup>55</sup> fertility rates with the development of part-time work. RENAUDAT *et al.* (1995) and JENSON *et al.*

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<sup>54</sup> Mostly, these measures support a reduction in professional activity. But they may go further. Other, one-off measures can alleviate opportunity costs in time spent by a mother with her little child. Maternity leave or leave for child sickness are two examples.

<sup>55</sup> This rise along with the drop in the rate of activity of mothers of two children has caused differences, which had been observed between these two categories up until then, to dwindle.

(1997) for France, and HAUSMAN *et al.* (1996) for Luxembourg agree with this opinion, and so does CETTE (1999) who goes as far as stating that “promoting voluntary part-time work [...] is an obvious and vital condition for better conciliation between professional life and family life” (1999, p. 70). It should not be forgotten though, that, in spite of this very clear-cut opinion, part-time work is not the only reconciliation measure, particularly in the case of women who do not want to reduce their commitment to their professional life. JUNTER-LOISEAU (1996) in fact, offers a more balanced view of part-time work. Though admitting it is the hallmark of reconciliation, she also considers it should be questioned because it is the most sexually form of employment: the great majority of part-time positions are held by women<sup>56</sup>. In our opinion though, this feature of part-time work draws attention to the fact that equal opportunities for men and women on the labour market have still not been achieved, as is also underlined by BIHR *et al.* (2000).

Starting from the idea according that part-time work is a ‘policy of employment that is more specifically feminine’ (p.71, 1999a), GALTIER underscores that its corollary would then be that women choose – or eventually accept - part-time work more often than men: the chances a woman has of resigning herself to part-time work<sup>57</sup> would be 16 points higher (GALTIER, 1999b). BARRERE-MAURISSON (2000), on the other hand, opposes this idea: according to this author, since domestic duties essentially rest on mothers, they never really have a choice. So from this standpoint, part-time work would never be a choice. In our opinion though, it could be said that the decision is up to women, but that, this choice is often made under considerably strong restraints.

Yet, all these authors do believe that working part-time is a measure of reconciliation because **it does not involve total withdrawal from the labour market**, while allowing domestic<sup>58</sup> duties to be managed. It thus favours work and family conciliation. According to GLAUDE (1999), part-time work opens the way to fulfilling the desire of having children to women who wish to work, either for financial reasons or because they want their training to pay off and to acquire pension rights, instead of having to give up this desire. From the view of the issue in question though, these elements could be reversed. Part-time work would allow women who so wish, not to give up on the idea of having a (another) child, just because they desire to hold a professional activity. It can also be underlined that this way of approaching the situation is comforted by the BLANCHET (1992) and BLANCHET *et al.* (1996) studies that show that, in most cases, women will give

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<sup>56</sup> This is true for 85% of part-time positions in France, 90% in Luxembourg (LEJEALLE, 1996) and 85% in Belgium (in 1999, Federaal Ministerie van Tewelstelling en Arbeid, 2001).

<sup>57</sup> These results come from data collected during Employment surveys on the same workers in the private sector during three consecutive years, from 1994 to 1996. So, for all those who, in 1994 viewed their part-time situation as forced, things were different in 1996, and depended on whether they were men or women. 23% of the women had resigned themselves to part-time work, which they now viewed as a choice, while only 7% of the men had followed a similar evolution. In parallel, 40% of the men had found full-time work against only 23% of the women.

<sup>58</sup> Because domestic duties are the actual main factor in coming to this kind of decisions, BIHR *et al.* (2000) are lead to deny part-time work this conciliation feature to a certain extent at least, referring to it as ‘so-called’.

preference to a professional activity (which is, to a certain extent, incompatible with fertility and would thus cause its own drop).

## **2. Public measures that alleviate the cost in time a mother spends on her young child**

There are several types of measures that alleviate the cost in time a mother spends on her young child. The ones are family policy measures while the others are tax measures.

### *a) Family policy measures*

#### *- Maternity leave*

The 1992 (92/85 CEE) European directive guarantees a maternity leave that is no less than 14 consecutive weeks in duration. Some States, when transposing this directive into their own national legislation, attributed a leave that was longer, up to 16 weeks in France and Luxembourg and 15 weeks in Belgium. In all three countries, a minimum period of affiliation is required for the right to a maternity allowance to be awarded. In Belgium and Luxembourg, this period is of 6 months, and in France, 10 months.

This maternity leave is coupled with a financial compensation, which can be received under the following conditions.

The total amount of payment is available for the period of maternity leave in Luxembourg and is paid by social security services.

In Belgium, the amount of the compensation depends on whether the person is working, unemployed or disabled. Paid workers receive 82% of their wages for the first 30 days, then, 75% of the maximum salary, from the 31<sup>st</sup> day on. When this period extends beyond 15 weeks, compensation is reduced to 60% of the maximum salary. Disabled people come under the same system apart from the first thirty days, during which they receive 79.5% of the maximum salary.

Unemployed people receive the basic allowance, that is, 60% of the maximum salary and limited to the amount of unemployment benefits, increased by 19.5% the first thirty days, and 15% from the 31<sup>st</sup> day on. Beyond this period, compensation returns to the basic level of unemployment benefits.

In France, a working mother receives a daily compensation from Social Security Services, limited to a certain ceiling. There are no legal provisions guaranteeing continued payment by the employer during maternity leave (of leave for adoption). However, a number of collective agreements guarantee continued payment in full or in part, by employers, from which the daily compensation received from Social Security Services is deducted.

#### *- Maternity allowance*

This family benefit only operates in Luxembourg, where women who reside in the country, do not work and thus, are not eligible for maternity compensation, receive a maternity allowance, the amount of which is a flat rate, for a period of 16 weeks.

#### *- Adoption leave and allowance*

Adopting a child opens the right to an adoption leave and to an adoption allowance in France and Luxembourg. The length of this period corresponds to the

number of weeks received after giving birth.

In France, adoption leave can either be taken by one of the parents or shared between the father and mother. It cannot be divided into more than two parts. The shortest part has to last a minimum of eleven days, taken by one of the parents, although both can actually take that time off simultaneously. If only one of the parents takes time off, the leave can last ten weeks maximum. If both parents share this period of leave, it is not to exceed ten weeks and eleven days maximum.

For each adopted child, a means tested adoption allowance is paid. It is equal to the allowance received for a young child. Payments will last twenty-one months starting in the month following arrival of the child in the home. It extends another eleven days (eighteen days if several children are adopted) if the father chooses to apply for paternal leave.

In Luxembourg, the right to a leave on arrival is open to an employed working woman. If she gives up this right, or if she is in a position of self-employment, her partner is entitled to apply for this leave on arrival. The parent who does not benefit from the leave on arrival receives two extraordinary days off on arrival of a child below the age of sixteen, which correspond to the two days granted to a father on birth of a child.

The adopting parent is entitled to maternity allowance for a period of eight weeks, and to two instalments of the birth allowance.

*- Paternity leave*

Paternity leave is not yet very common in member States of the European Union. The legislation on work lists it among time off taken for special circumstances, personal convenience, or family events. It lasts two to three days in Belgium, France and Luxembourg. And in all three States, the father is entitled to full pay during his time off.

Early 2002, in France, paternity leave for birth or adoption of a child was added to this time off for family events. This leave can last 11 days but can be extended to 18 days in the case of multiple births or adoptions. To qualify for this leave, a father has to request it one month before the child's birth and use it within 4 months of birth. Paternity leave is paid up to the limit of the Social Security ceiling.

*- Parental leave*

The purpose of this measure is to reconcile better family life commitments with professional life ones, and was the subject a European Directive in 1996 (96/34/CEE). It is aimed at allowing a parent to take care of his child for several months during the child's first years while providing a guarantee of reemployment.

The right to parental leave is open to all employees in possession of at least one year's seniority with their present company. It lasts 3 months in Belgium, a year renewable twice in France, and 6 months full-time or 12 months part-time in Luxembourg.

In Luxembourg, a flat rate allowance is paid on a monthly basis. In Belgium, it takes the form of an allowance for break that is paid in one lump sum. In France, parental leave can be compensated by parental allowance for education

that is allocated to a parent caring for at least two children<sup>59</sup>.

In Luxembourg, a person who reduces his professional activity in order to use this time for the education of a child who is under the age of two is entitled to a half-allowance for education. This allowance may also be paid to the parent of a child below the age of two, who holds a professional activity, but it is means-tested. However it may not be added to the parental leave allowance.

*- Leave for child sickness*

The European Directive of 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1996 (96/34/CEE) also created the possibility of a leave for family reasons. It does not contain any clear stipulations as to its possible duration. It is therefore up to each individual State to introduce “necessary measures to allow workers the possibility of a leave due to circumstances beyond their control related to urgent family reasons”. These measures are implemented in accord with legislation and collective agreements or practices in force locally. Hence, significant differences between legislation in the three countries in question are observed.

In Belgium, should a child fall ill or be in hospital, the parent is entitled to 10 days off if he holds a full-time professional activity and 5 days in the case of part-time activity. In France, this leave is limited to 3 days but is extended to 5 days if the child is under one year old or if the parent is in charge of three children at least. In both States, this leave does not come with any form of compensation, in contrast with Luxembourg, where a worker receives payment during the two days off he is entitled to in the event of child sickness.

*- Allowance for parental presence*

This benefit is only granted in France where a parent whose child is under the age of 20 and seriously ill or disabled, is entitled to a full- or part-time leave of 4 months that is renewable twice in order to take care of his/her child. This leave comes with an allowance, the amount of which is not related to the family's income but is determined according to the level of reduction in work time and to the parent's family situation.

*b) Tax measures aimed at reducing (or decreasing) professional activity*

In Belgium, since a large amount of tax measures is related to the family situation, their purpose is to encourage women whose partner has a job not to hold a professional activity. VERBIST (2002) calculated the precise impact marital quotient has on the labour supply of women. She shows that female labour force participation would increase from 62% to 74% were it not for this quotient. This marital quotient therefore appears to encourage women to decrease their professional activity, or even to cease it completely.

Both France and Luxembourg are also regulated by the principle of communal imposition on married couples. Female labour force participation is thus likely to be discouraged in these two countries too.

Measures relating to professional activity reduction/cessation are presented in the following tables.

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<sup>59</sup> This parent must also have paid contributions into insurance for old age ('assurance vieillesse') for a minimum of two years in the five years preceding birth.

	Belgium	France	Luxembourg
<b>Maternity leave</b>	Yes « Congé de maternité »	Yes « Congé de maternité »	Yes « Congé de maternité »
<b>Beneficiary</b>	Insured women	Insured women	Insured women
<b>Conditions</b>	Qualifying period of 6 months	Qualifying period of 10 months	Qualifying period of 6 months during the year preceding the birth
<b>Duration</b>	15 weeks 17 weeks for multiple births the week immediately preceding delivery being compulsory 8 mandatory weeks after delivery	16 weeks: 6 weeks immediately preceding delivery and 10 mandatory weeks after delivery 2 additional weeks before birth in case of pathological pregnancy. 26 weeks (8 before confinement) in case of a third child 34 weeks (12 before confinement) in case of twins 42 weeks (24 before confinement) for multiple births (more than 2 children)	16 weeks: 8 weeks before resumed date of confinement and 8 weeks after effective date of confinement 4 weeks supplement for nursing mothers and in case of premature birth or multiple births
<b>Cash benefit amount</b>	82% of wages (without ceiling) in the first 30 days, and 75% or 60% of wages up to ceiling respectively for period from 31 <sup>st</sup> day and for period exceeding the 15 weeks. Special regulations for unemployed workers and for disabled Unemployed workers : basic benefit amount + 19,5% of wage with ceiling; from the 31 <sup>st</sup> day : basic amount + 15% of wage with ceiling; after 15 weeks : basic amount. Disabled : 79,5% of wage with ceiling in the first 30 days, from the 31 <sup>st</sup> day 75% of the wage with ceiling; after 15 weeks: 60% of the wage with ceiling.	Net salary with ceiling Maximum : EUR 62,88 per day (EUR 230,77 per month) Minimum : EUR 7,69 per day (EUR 1886,40 per month)	100% of the salary the insured received before the maternity leave

	Belgium	France	Luxembourg
<b>Maternity allowance</b>	No	No	Yes « Allocation de maternité »
<b>Conditions</b>			The women must be domiciliated in Luxembourg and not entitled in any job
<b>Duration</b>			16 weeks
<b>Total amount</b>			EUR 2812,40 (or EUR 175,77 per week)
<b>Age supplements</b>			
	Belgium	France	Luxembourg
<b>Adoption</b>		Yes « congé d'adoption »	Yes « congé d'accueil »
<b>Conditions</b>		Each employed who adopt a child.	Adoption of a child aged less than 6 years. The salaried mother has a right to the adoption leave If she renounces to it, or if she is self-employed, than his husband can take it.
<b>Duration</b>	3 days within the month following adoption	10 weeks for one parent and for the adoption of 1 child. 18 weeks if the parent has still 2 children 22 weeks for a multiple adoption If the adoption leave is divided among both parents, 11 more days in both cases of a simple adoption and 18 more days in case of a multiple adoption.	8 weeks for one child, 12 weeks for at least two children
<b>Allowance</b>	Full wage maintained	EUR 156,30	No special grant, but EUR: 1050,98 what represents the parts 2 and 3 of the birth grant.
<b>Social contribution</b>	No	CRDS (0,5%)	If one of the parent doesn't work: EUR: 1406,20 second part of the maternity allowance (8 weeks after birth)

Paternity leave n°1	Belgium	France	Luxembourg
	Yes, « congé de circonstance à l'occasion de la naissance de son enfant »	Yes, « Congé pour événements familiaux »	Yes, « Congé extraordinaire pour convenances personnelles »
Conditions	none		
Duration	3 days during the 12 days following the birth	3 days after birth or adoption	2 days after birth
Level of payment	100 % of wage during 3 days	100 % of wage during 3 days	100 % of wage during 2 days

Note:

France : Since January 2002, a second kind of leave for fathers can be added to the first mentioned above.

Paternity leave n°2	Belgium	France	Luxembourg
	No	Yes, « Congé de paternité »	No
Conditions		Each worker (wage earner and self employed) has a right to this leave. He has to ask for it per registered letter 1 month before the child birth and to take it in a delay of 4 months after the child birth.	
Duration		11 days after birth or adoption, 18 days in case of a multiple birth or adoption	
Level of payment		For wage earner : payment of the net wage with the limit of the social security ceiling (EUR 62,88 per day) . For self employed : daily lump sum (EUR 39,2).	
Social contribution		CRDS, CSG	

Parental leave	Belgium		France		Luxembourg	
	Yes “Congé parental”		Yes “Congé parental”		Yes “Congé parental”	
<b>Conditions</b>	Each wage earner who is working at least 1 year in the firm during the 15 preceding months.		To be employed at least one year in the firm before the birth or before the adoption		Each wage earner who is working at least 12 months in the firm and who is working at least part-time before the birth	
<b>Duration</b>	3 months for birth or adoption.		1 year, which possibility to repeat it twice. If the adopted child is between 3 and 16 years old, only one year parental leave.		6 months for a full time parental leave 12 months for a part-time parental leave	
<b>Flexibility</b>	For full time worker only : Possibility of working time reduction - of half of the time during 6 months - of 1/5 during 15 months with possibility to fraction the parental leave in periods of 3 months.		Choice between - full time parental leave - reduction of working time (more than 16 hours per week and less than 1/5 of the working time taken in force in the firm)		One of the parent has to take the parental leave just after the maternity leave. The other parent can take it until the fifth year of the child but only if the first parental leave was taken before. For single parent the child age limit is 5 years to take the parental leave.	
<b>Child’s age limit</b>	4 years, 8 years for a handicapped child (66%) 8 years in case of adoption		3 years The year following this of the adoption for a child aged more than 3 years.		After the maternity leave for the first parental leave and before the child aged 5 years for the second parental leave	
<b>Allowance amount</b>	Lump sum : EUR 536,65		No Possibility to receive a parental education allowance for parent who have at least two children		EUR 1611,10 per month for full time parental leave EUR 805,55 for part time parental leave	
<b>Job guaranteed</b>	Yes		Yes		Yes	

	Belgium	France	Luxembourg
<b>Education allowance</b>	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Conditions</b>		<p><b>“Allocation parentale d’éducation” (APE)</b></p> <p>Each worker (wage earner or self employed) who have at least 2 children and one is less than 3 years old; who has worked at least during 2 years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- who stop or reduce his working time to at least 4/5 of the full time taken in force in the firm</li> <li>- who has no work after a parental leave or a broken contract</li> <li>- who is still working part-time</li> </ul>	<p><b>“Allocation d’éducation”</b></p> <p>for the parent who educates a child under 2 years and either does not have a regular income or whose yearly income, cumulated with that of the husband/wife, does not exceed:                      EUR 46164,69 when educating one child,                      EUR 61552,92 when educating two children,                      EUR 76941,15 when educating three children.</p>
<b>Duration</b>		3 years Adoption : 1 year for a child between 2 and 15 years old; until 16 years for a 15 years old child.	22 months (from the end of the maternity leave till the child is 2 years old).
<b>Child's age limit</b>		3 years Longer in case of adoption	2 years 4 years in case of a handicapped child 4 years in case of at least 3 children and as long as one is less than 4 years old
<b>Allowance amount</b>		Monthly amount: EUR 484,97. Partial amounts: EUR 320,67 if the part-time activity does not make up more than 50% of the legal working time; EUR 242,51 if the activity amounts between 50% and 80% of the working time.	Full allowance: EUR 439,41 Half the allowance is available in the case of part-time employment : EUR 219,67
<b>Social contribution</b>		0,5% (CRDS Contribution au remboursement de la Dette sociale)	
<b>Taxation</b>	No	No	

Note : For France, all the indicated amount are net with deduction from the CRDS when this social contribution is applied.

	Belgium Yes «Congé pour motifs impérieux»	France Yes, «Congé pour enfant malade»	Luxembourg Yes, «Congé rémunéré pour raisons familiales»
<b>Leave for sick children</b>			
<b>Conditions</b>	Sickness, hospitalisation of a child (but also of a partner or family member). The employer can ask the employee to prove that her intervention is urgent and indispensable	Sickness or accident has to be proved by a doctor's certificate	In case of sickness or accident of a child
<b>Duration</b>	10 days per year for full time and 5 days per year for part time	3 days per year and per child 5 days for a child aged less than 1 year or if the wage earner has 3 or more children aged less than 16 years  Most of the collective agreements offer some more days but also not paid.	2 days per year and per child
<b>Childs' age limit</b>	none	16 years	15 years
<b>Level of payment</b>	none	none	100% of wage paid by the State

	Belgium No	France Yes, « Allocation de présence parentale » (APP)	Luxembourg No
<b>Allowance for parental attendance</b>			
<b>Beneficiary</b>		Each wage earner whose child has an accident, is heavy handicapped or seriously sick and needs a daily presence with him can ask for the APP.	
<b>Conditions</b>		To receive the agreement from the social security's doctor. To have a full time or part time leave for parental attendance.	
<b>Duration</b>		First period of 4 months, with possibility to repeat it twice and a maximum of 12 months.	
<b>Flexibility</b>		Full time leave or reduction of working time to part time work	
<b>Child's age limit</b>		20 years	
<b>Allowance amount</b>		1. For a couple Full allowance : € 484,97 Reduction of 50% or more of the activity : € 320,67 Reduction of at least 20% to less than 50% of the activity : € 242,51  2. For single Full allowance : € 641,34 Reduction of 50% or more of the activity : € 423,30 Reduction of at least 20% to less than 50% of the activity : € 320,67	
<b>Job guaranteed</b>		Yes	
<b>Social contribution</b>			
<b>Taxation</b>		0,5 % (CRDS)	
		No	

### **3. If they do affect the labour supply, could family policy measures aimed at encouraging part-time work also influence fertility?**

Affecting the **desire to have children**, the family policy could eventually have an impact upon women's final number of children. This relation is mentioned by several authors (cf. EKERT-JAFFE, 1994; THELOT *et al.*, 1998; MAJNONI D'INTIGNANO, 1999, 2000; BAGAVOS *et al.*, 2000). Their conclusion is based on findings indicating that the actual number of children is almost equal to the number of desired children<sup>60</sup>, and therefore, they add that an increased desire to bear children would suffice to raise fertility.

Now, developing part-time work would specifically help to increase the desire to bear children, particularly since, with women who can remain in the labour market, their confidence in the future would grow (THELOT *et al.*, 1998; MAJNONI D'INTIGNANO, 2000). Sharing the same point of view on this analysis, BAGAVOS *et al.* (2000) also underlines that low fertility should be seen as a sign of the difficulties individuals are facing in achieving their goals, both on a family level and on a work level. As a reminder, although mentioned on a number of occasions, viewing public measures that affect professional activity as having an effect on fertility has never been demonstrated.

Apart from this impact that is hard to verify, and relates to a growth in the desire for a child, what effects have been measured? For what concerns measures in favour of part-time activity, the impact's direction on female's professional activity is as expected: the purpose of these measures is to encourage women to reduce their work time, and this effect is likely to have been observed. But beyond the extent of this impact, another question is raised: how much will this expected drop in the labour supply, related to family policy measures, work in favour of a growth in fertility?

It actually appears that measures presented earlier rarely lead to part-time activity. In the case of France for instance, only 20% of the people benefiting from APE receive it on a part-time basis, in other words, only this section of the people pursue their part-time activity while receiving this allowance (AFSA, 1998; PIKETTI, 1998). According to PIKETTI, this figure is a sign of limited success, showing that voluntary part-time work has reached its limit. As for FAGNANI (1996), she suggests this low success is due to the fact that part-time APE compensation is relatively low when compared to the correlated financial loss, and additionally, part-time work sometimes presents organisational challenges for parents, in particular when it comes to looking after children, especially when working hours are flexible. The second explanation seems to us as likely as the first one is surprising. Sure, the amount of part-time APE is lower than full-time APE, but a mother's financial loss is also reduced if she holds on to

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. for example TOULEMON *et al.* (1999). This equal standing results from birth control, which makes unplanned pregnancies more and more rare, and from progress in the medical field, namely assisted procreation, which has opened the way for parents with medical problems to desired childbearing. Not to be confused are desired number of children and ideal number of children: the former is related to the situation of parents, which is not the case for the latter, thus slightly higher (in France for instance, the figure would stand at 2.6 on average for 1999, against 2.3 for the number of desired children).

her professional activity rather than ceasing all activity, and the APE compensation ratio is likely to be closer to 1 if decrease in professional activity is not total.

To our knowledge, only one study is aimed at analysing the behaviour of women working part-time who apply for part-time APE compensation (JEANDIDIER *et al.*, 2002). Among all the factors brought out (taking into account that this study is only based on data collected in one region of France, Lorraine), the costs of childcare and the partner's availability stand out particularly. The authors conclude that reducing these childcare costs could allow a mother not to withdraw so much from her commitment to the labour market.

Beyond these few results concerning the impact of family benefits in favour of a decrease in professional activity on the level of activity, there exists, to our knowledge, no study conducted on the subsequent influence these public measures could have on fertility in all three countries.

The object of this second paragraph was to analyse the three options a woman who wants to stay on the labour market can choose from, if she desires to have a child. All three cases prove to be, in effect, measures to reconcile family life with professional life. In some cases however, mothers are observed to be encouraged to withdraw from the labour market. This amounts to a failure in the process of conciliation.

### **§3. Failure of work-family reconciliation: withdrawal from the labour market**

Family benefits presented in the previous point and relating to parental leave or APE may lead to a decrease in professional activity, but also to total cessation. In the first case, we have already considered, the result is work-family conciliation. In the second case, a mother takes on a non-working status. These family benefits, in favour of withdrawal from the labour market, could thus have a bearing on fertility. For this reason maybe, as AFSA (1998) underlines on the subject of APE, the finality of this measure is often said to be in favour of work-family conciliation (cf. for example MAJNONI D'INTIGNANO, 2000<sup>61</sup>). However, since the result consists of total or partial withdrawal from the labour market, we are no longer in the framework of work-family reconciliation. It could of course be argued that this withdrawal from the labour market is only temporary, that the mother will resume her activity at the end of the APE benefit period, and that this allowance should thus be viewed as a measure of conciliation if referred to on the medium-term. The fact of the matter is though, that for one thing, these women do abandon the labour market even temporarily, and therefore, do not have to reconcile work with family during the period they receive APE. Also, reinserting the labour market is much more challenging for these women at the end of the APE benefit period, than for those who held their part-time position (cf. FAGNANI, 1995).

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<sup>61</sup> But this author then states that APE is actually aimed at keeping some young women at home to bring up their children, and is thus in contradiction with the idea of equal opportunities for men and women. This view of APE is also held by BOYER (1999), whose opinion is that this benefit perpetuates the way roles are shared within a couple.

Thus, inasmuch as these family policy measures lead to withdrawal from the labour market, they are in effect evidence of failure of the work-family reconciliation process: the time cost spent on the child cannot be shared in a satisfactory way, it thus rests upon the mother and causes her to leave the labour market. In this final paragraph, we will be considering the impact family policy measures leading to withdrawal from the labour market have on fertility, as it appears from the various surveys conducted in the three countries in question<sup>62</sup>.

It has to be clarified from the very start that measures presented as being in favour of a possible decrease (or cessation) in professional activity are those that involve such an objective, if not directly, at the very least, indirectly. However, as a supplement to the family income, benefits of a purely financial nature allocated to a mother regardless of her choice in professional activity, might also encourage (because of their effect on the income) one of the parents to reduce his professional activity, since the family's available income would remain identical with the help of these benefits. Having said that, we will be principally interested in the first type of measures since this one is most widely studied in literature. But, later, we will present results concerning the impact of measures of a purely financial nature on the female labour supply, and their possible consequences upon fertility<sup>63</sup>.

#### **A. The impact of family benefits in favour of withdrawal from the labour market on withdrawal from the labour market and fertility**

This development is based on the supposition we have presented previously according to which there is a negative relation between professional activity and fertility, the former affecting the latter because women now show a preference for work (BLANCHET, 1992; BLANCHET *et al.*, 1996).

In this image, what can the impact of family policy measures be, and what are their mechanisms?

In the case of France, studies mainly consider the impact APE has had on female labour force participation since the change in conditions of eligibility, in July 1994. Results generally concur in showing the massive effect APE has had. But all of them also underline that mothers are affected very differently depending on their individual characteristics. In Luxembourg, studies are conducted on the influence of parental leave, but even they are rare. As for Belgium, there simply are not any.

#### **1. A marked impact of measures in favour of a decrease in professional activity on female labour force participation**

For what concerns France, APE influences the decrease in female labour force participation to a significant extent, more so even than was initially expected by forecasters. Hence, in 1994, shortly after new rules on the way benefits were

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<sup>62</sup> These measures are identical to those presented in the previous point, relating to a drop in professional activity.

<sup>63</sup> We could have followed a similar process when analysing ways of encouraging a decrease in activity and their impact on fertility. But, as already mentioned, no study on this point and for countries under consideration is available in literature.

allocated had been implemented, and thus a long time before they started to spread, CAUSSAT *et al.* (1994) estimate the number of positions to be opened on a yearly basis at 30,000, this being an 'optimistic' forecast, while another assessment offers the figure of 15,000.

In fact, from December 1995, 36% of the women who had had a second child after July 1994 had applied for APE (AFSA, 1996), and in 1996, 110,000 working women would have left the labour market<sup>64</sup> (AFSA, 1996; THELOT *et al.*, 1998). In 1998, AFSA makes the following observation: 200,000 to 250,000 women would have been incited by APE to leave the labour market. In conjunction with the rise in the number of beneficiaries, the number of which would have tripled on a three-year period, the rate of female labour force participation would have dropped from 69% to 53%. In the point of view of AFSA (1996, 1998), such figures confirm the causal relation there is between APE and employment levels of women, and also, as a consequence, the fact that family policy has to do with labour policy. PIKETTY (1998) speaks about an incitement to withdraw from the labour market for 35% to even 60%<sup>65</sup> (depending on the assessment method) of the 220,000 beneficiaries of full-time APE in December 1997. Observing discrepancies between what had been forecasted and the real effect of APE on women leaving the labour market, AFSA indicates that these are the result of poor estimations of the inciting effect of APE, and not of the opportunist effect, which had been forecasted<sup>66</sup>. He also restates how challenging it is to come up with forecasts that are based on variations in the behaviour of individuals.

BONNET *et al.* (1999b), using data from surveys ('enquêtes Emploi') conducted between March 1993 and March 1998<sup>67</sup>, starts by presenting the following results, concerning women eligible for APE: for one thing, their rate of activity drops with the growing number of their children regardless of their qualifications, but also, their rate of activity increases with qualifications, regardless of the number of children. Then, the authors particularly insist of the fact that these women's rate of activity decreases when the number of their children increases, regardless this time, of the rank of their last child, and that this

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<sup>64</sup> It has to be underlined that these figures do not account for the proportion of positions liberated due to the inciting effect of APE and not to the opportunist effect. The latter being observed when a woman receives benefits while her activity behaviour has not been altered. In an understanding of a purist nature, this opportunist effect occurs when a woman did not hold a full-time job before her child was born. More widely, this effect is also seen when a woman reduces her professional activity and thus avails herself of the right to APE, but would have done so even in the absence of APE. Now, to assess the real impact of APE on female labour force participation, positions that would have been opened without granting APE should not be taken into consideration. In other words we should only be interested in the inciting effect of APE and not in the opportunist effect.

<sup>65</sup> That would put the opportunist effect levels at 40 to 65%.

<sup>66</sup> Estimations of the opportunist effect and inciting effect were based on data collected when APE was introduced in 1985, and benefits were only open from the third child. It was supposed, in preparing a forecast for 1994, that the inciting effect, concerning mothers of two children this time, would be twice as high as figures observed in 1985. In reality, according to AFSA, this figure should have been multiplied by five to come close to the truth. On the other hand, forecasts of the opportunist effect were more accurate, with figures only 10% below what was finally observed.

<sup>67</sup> This survey followed 688 women part of a couple, at the time of their child's birth.

effect varies depending on the year of birth. Before 1994 (when the right to APE was started to mothers of two children), the rate of female labour force participation dropped 5 points after the birth of a first and second child too. In contrast, after 1994, the drop after a first child was of 3 points only, while it reached 20 points after the second one. According to these authors, it could be concluded that mothers are less tempted to cease their activity after the birth of their first child because they wish to avail themselves of the right to APE<sup>68</sup> after their second child is born.

APE's impact on women's professional activity stands out as strong and massive from these various studies.

In Luxembourg, figures are hard to come by. Only a study by BORSENBERGER (2001) provides insight into what the impact parental leave might be. Among working-people who might be concerned by parental leave (because they are not opposed to the idea of having another child), 45% actually claim to be interested in this family benefit. This relatively high percentage is nonetheless unbalanced due to age (the youngest ones are the most interested), to income (since parental leave and the decrease or cessation of activity it entails, is naturally more costly for families whose income is relatively high), and finally to gender, since 72% of them were women, against 27% of men. On this latter point, it would seem interesting to add that this difference in concern, related to gender, is far greater in France, where 98% of the APE beneficiaries are women<sup>69</sup> (AFSA, 1998). Also to be mentioned, are the various figures provided by the Ministry of Family of Luxembourg (2002), which paint a very different picture: among the 9,468 beneficiaries of parental leave in February 2002, only 11.8% are fathers. It would therefore seem that the positive opinion fathers give remains only on the level of intentions. Having said this, on the whole, almost every other parent could possibly decrease his professional activity on birth of a child. Were this to be the case, such a family policy measure would thus have a particularly significant effect upon professional activity.

## **2. The effects of measures in favour of withdrawal from the labour market vary in intensity according to a mother's characteristics**

The only available results concern France.

APE alleviates the opportunity cost of having spent with the child and thus is the reason for which it encourages a withdrawal from the labour market. Of course, the value of this opportunity cost varies widely depending on the mother's activity. And therefore, it is no surprise when effects of APE on activity are seen to vary in intensity according to the mother's characteristics. Similar conclusions are drawn from all the studies conducted on the characteristics that are most likely to open the opportunity for mothers to APE. In this case, the most frequent beneficiaries of APE are less qualified, younger women (under the age of 30),

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<sup>68</sup> As a reminder, to be entitled to APE, a parent must have contributed to old age pension ('assurance vieillesse') for a while. This period varies with the rank of the child in the family: for a second child, it is of two years in the five years preceding birth (it is of two years in the ten years preceding birth of a third child or more).

<sup>69</sup> But these are facts, not intentions.

because, says MAJNONI D'INTIGNANO (2000), "paid to look after her children, a woman who has no qualifications is greatly incited to stay at home" (p.54). Based on a study conducted on the national files of the Family Allowances Office (of December 1995), AFSA (1996) adds that these women often reside in rural areas, which would also indicate the challenges they face in finding solutions to have their children looked after. Thus, APE would lead to segregation in the labour market (AFSA, 1998; THELOT *et al.*, 1998; BONNET *et al.*, 1999b; MAJNONI D'INTIGNANO, 1999): for young and unqualified women, APE would solve a problem of unemployment<sup>70</sup>.

### **3. Impact of measures aimed at reducing work time on fertility**

Studies indicating a relation between measures aimed at reducing professional activity and fertility are extremely rare. Actually, the only available results concern France.

According to RIGNOLS (1996), APE for a third child would have resulted in an increase of 8,000 births per year in the 1980's.

Conversely, various authors suggest that APE only had a calendar effect. In other words, additional births related to these benefits would have been planned anyway a little later. They would thus only have been brought forward due to APE, the effect not being of a structural nature (FAGNANI, 1995b; PIKETTY, 1998). So among the 25 parents who benefited from APE and whom FAGNANI interviewed, 15 declared they were planning a third child<sup>71</sup>, but APE caused them to bring it forward, to an earlier date.

What is more, AFSA (1996) draws attention to the fact that this calendar effect may only be apparent. He shows the following result: APE for the second child, implemented in 1994, would have reduced the average time between the first and the second child from 52.4 to 50.8 months. But a closer look reveals that mothers who always<sup>72</sup> had their children within a short period are over-representative among APE beneficiaries (young, non-qualified mothers). Consequently, no real calendar effect is presented in this study. Nevertheless, the author underscores that this is no proof of its non-existence, namely because of the small size of the group of women interviewed, and of the short time there was since eligibility conditions for these benefits had been reassessed.

Having said this, any calendar effect, in bringing births forward, would essentially result in the mother's age lowering when her first child is born, or in shortening intergenetic<sup>73</sup> intervals if this birth is not the first one<sup>74</sup>. And these two consequences are significant if mothers' final number of children is not to

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<sup>70</sup> In this way, it should be asked whether family benefits really affect professional activity, or whether this would only be an appearance, concealing a problem of labour market rationing, the withdrawal from the labour market thus being more due to unemployment rather than to these benefits (RAY, 1989; BLANCHET, *et al.*, 1997; ALBISER, 1999).

<sup>71</sup> This survey was conducted prior to 1994, when parents were only eligible for APE when they had their third child.

<sup>72</sup> Which means, even in the absence of APE.

<sup>73</sup> Refers to the time observed between two successive births.

<sup>74</sup> Also, this calendar effect increases the speed of population growth, leading the population to get younger.

decrease (KOJIMA *et al.*, 1997; THELOT *et al.*, 1998; MAJNONI D'INTIGNANO, 1999, 2000). In other words, a calendar effect would lead to structural consequences on fertility.

These conclusions relate to benefits that entail a condition of total non-activity, so, logically, an impact, in terms of withdrawal from the labour market, is to be expected. But other family benefits could also lead to such an impact, since they consist of a supplement into the family's income. This will be considered in the following point.

### **B. Impact of financial measures that do not entail any explicit condition of withdrawal from the labour market, upon professional activity and fertility**

Since these measures consist of financial contributions in favour of the family, they could, because of their income effect, incite a decrease in professional activity. Various authors put this supposition forward (cf. for example BLANCHET *et al.*, 1997; ALLAIN *et al.*, 1998; THELOT *et al.*, 1998; FLIPO *et al.*, 1998; ALBISER, 1999; 2000). Yet, according to FLIPO *et al.*, this effect would be weak<sup>75</sup>: were family benefits to increase income by 1%, the rate of female labour force participation would only drop by 0.2 points.

On this subject, BLANCHET *et al.* (1997) and ALBISER (1999, 2000) draw attention to the fact that demand for labour is not continuous. This might explain an apparent weak effect, if the impact of family benefits were not sufficient to draw mothers' labour supply below a certain level. Always above this level, and thus not in line with a level of labour demand, women's labour supply would remain unaltered. In other words, family benefits would modify the decision process that moves women to change professional situations, but this change would only be observed if the limit level was attained. The effect of family benefits would thus vary according to whether the actual activity status or the desired activity status were taken into consideration.

Conducting a study on 2,531 French mothers (based on data from ECHP of 1994), ALBISER observes that 91.8% of them would hold the same professional status, regardless of whether they received family benefits or not, but 8.2% of them, non-working, would work full-time if they did not receive family benefits they were actually eligible for. The author concludes that, in the case of these mothers, family benefits have a clear role of a disincentive nature towards work. The effect under consideration is however limited in its extent. This author also asserts that family benefits would have to reach the astronomical amount of 5,375 Fr. per month (€ 820.- per month), for all mothers working full-time to feel really incited to cease their professional activity.

Financial family benefits thus incite women very little to decrease their

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<sup>75</sup> What is more, in the opinion of several authors, (RAY, 1989; AFSA, 1996; ALBISER, 1999), the direction of the causal relation between family benefits and female labour force participation would not be easy to establish, and could be two-way, unless this benefit had been newly introduced, or eligibility conditions for it had just been reassessed (and even then, ALBISER states that an anticipation phenomenon could occur). This might explain why a number of studies were conducted on rank two APE, the eligibility conditions of which had just been defined.

labour supply. As for their impact on fertility, it may be of a direct or indirect nature (cf. the first section of this chapter). Concerning the latter, no result has been obtained in the three countries under consideration. It could however be supposed that the negative relation there is between professional activity and fertility may lead the latter to rise when a mother stops her professional activity, since family benefits presented here result in withdrawal from the labour market for a number of mothers. For example, among mothers of two children, those who ceased their professional activity when their second child was born, might, on average, be more incited to have a third child than others.

### **General conclusion**

The object of this report was to compare fertility together with factors that affect it in three European countries (Belgium, France and Luxembourg) while emphasizing problems to conciliate family life with professional life. To this end, the situation in these three countries was described, main family policy measures were presented, and a global overview of the literature that exists in each of the three countries was introduced.

Before stating the main limits observed in this report, we will try to isolate key lessons.

1. First, for what concerns the description of the situation in these three countries, the data provided by national statistics and Eurostat offer a relatively clear vision. But since this report takes a comparative approach, we were limited to the information available simultaneously in all three countries. This restraint means we were not able to mention a number of subjects, for which information was available only for two or even one country of those in question in some cases. This restriction affected France in particular where, to our knowledge, some of the available statistics do not have their counterparts in Belgium or in Luxembourg.

Additionally, some information, which could have shed some useful light on the subject of this report, is missing in all three countries. This is the case for instance, and, as far as we found, for statistics concerning the number of maternal helpers who keep young children in their own home.

2. Now, with regards to introducing the three national family policies, available information permits a very satisfactory presentation. Obviously, we refrained from enlarging on the fine details of each respective legislation, it being so heavy and complex, particularly in the case of France. This complexity does not make the assessment of goals pursued by the policy or the measure of its effects an easy task. This will partly explain why most empirical studies focus on analysing the consequences of a particular family benefit or group of benefits. Yet, this limit may result in perverse effects in the form of mistaken views: conclusions appropriate for a part are not necessarily true for the whole. This is the case for a number of studies on APE in France, for which it would be wrong to generalise effects to all of French family policy.

3. As for the literature review, the overwhelming feeling is one of imbalance between studies conducted on situations in Belgium and Luxembourg, and those conducted in France, the latter being far more numerous. Having said that, taken independently of the country in question, surveys conducted on the effects of family policy are all but non-existent. But, on the specific impact this policy has on fertility, a relatively limited number of recent studies is available. Also, these works cover unevenly the various themes of interest. As a result, although we are in possession of a significant number of analyses concerning the link between costs of a child and fertility, we are left wanting on many other aspects, starting from the possible impact upon the labour supply of sharing duties within the couple, and thus on fertility. The same can be said with regards to the impact measures in favour of part-time work may have on fertility, which is rarely mentioned.

4. Having said that, the following points can be drawn from the literature panorama.

a) Financial measures that cover costs of a child partially, regardless of the mother's choice in professional activity, can indeed work in favour of fertility, as long as they represent a substantial part of these costs. At least, that is what the studies under consideration have concluded, although it cannot be said whether we are faced with a limit effect (below a certain amount, family benefits would not affect fertility), or whether the instrument of measure that is used does not detect any significant effect, as long as the amount remains too low.

b) Concerning the impact of family policy measures, which would be aimed at inciting fathers to share tasks associated with parenthood with their partner, upon fertility, assessment is uneasy for three reasons.

The first reason relates to the very nature of the key measures taken in this field. Whether parental leave or APE, since these measures are open to fathers as much as to mothers, the clear intention of the legislator is to see fathers get deeply involved in family duties, at one point in their professional careers. But, in reality, mothers make up the majority of applicants for this type of measures, which paradoxically means that the traditional way of sharing tasks in the household is thus, temporarily at least, reinforced.

Assessment is also difficult for a second reason, due to the little time we have at our disposal since paternal leave was introduced in France in 2001. Success of this leave expressly addressed to fathers will indeed help to come to a clear evaluation of the real impact family policy has on the way tasks are shared.

Finally, assessment is hard to establish because, even though family policy is able to offer fathers the opportunity of getting deeply involved in family duties for a while, it has not yet found effective means to encourage a better way of sharing daily tasks. Now, surveys tend to show that, on average, the way tasks are shared within couples evolves very little. This may, for some women at least, constitute a hindrance to fertility. Indeed, women who wish to continue working and, in whose opinion, a better sharing out of tasks with their partners, is a necessary step before having another child, may be inhibited from procreating. On

the other hand, other women could have different preferences and welcome happily total specialisation within the couple, for a time at least: they would, for example, stop working to welcome their third child.

c) For its part, the impact upon fertility, of a multiplication of possibilities of child-care and/or a lowering of the costs thus involved for parents, remains to be established. What these studies do indeed demonstrate is that this type of measure works in favour of female labour force participation. Based on studies having established the partial incompatibility between fertility and female labour force participation, it could therefore be concluded that increasing the offer of child-care services or lowering its price for the user would paradoxically lead to a drop in fertility. But, leaving aside reasoning that involves alternatives (either work, or motherhood), and replacing it in a work-family conciliation view, making child-care easier could naturally attenuate the apparent antagonism. If a family policy offers a broader range of these services, at a lower price, it can hope to counterbalance at least the tendency women who desire to maintain their professional activity might have to reduce their final number of children.

d) When the goal is conciliating family life with professional life, the leading measure appears to be making voluntary part-time work easier. Many are the studies that include measures such as parental leave or APE that are likely to work in favour of this form of reduced activity. It could have been hoped therefore that the impact of part-time work on fertility had been identified. In reality though, in order to qualify for such a family benefit, and given the choice between reducing their activity and stopping completely, women would, more often than not, opt for the latter. Hence, the group of women concerned by this reduction in activity is too small to be able to constitute a basis for measuring reliably the effects of part-time work on fertility.

e) The case of women who choose to withdraw from the labour market actually amounts to failure of the reconciliation process, even if on the scale of a lifespan, this failure is not total if women later resume their professional activity. As a matter of fact, in many cases (but not in public services nor in Luxembourg, partly, because of the low level of unemployment), a woman who stops working to bring up her children finds herself in a difficult situation when she attempts to reinsert the labour market. But this failure of the work-family conciliation process entails rather positive consequences with regards to fertility. Women who stop work in order to bring up their children would actually seem to reduce time between pregnancies, and that could eventually contribute to a rise in their final number of children. Nevertheless, the issue of the impact of what from the start, only appears to be a calendar effect upon final number of children, remains unsettled.

All in all, family policy does not appear devoid of impact on fertility, at least in the countries (France in particular, and Luxembourg) where studies are conducted on it. But these effects are not sizeable, probably because of the relative shy actions taken in favour of families in these countries. Although family policy in these countries is more developed than in other European countries, it still remains below a level of generosity above which many women would modify their choice of fertility with a natalist view. Also, studies, which this report provides feedback on, underline the many directions family policy follows in its

action on fertility. Indeed, direct effects work along with indirect ones, which have an action through modulation of women's professional activity.

For sure, the preceding conclusions could, to an extent, be contested if both our fundamental suppositions, which limit the very breadth of the studies used in compiling these results, were put in question. These two suppositions are as follows: first, all that matters, is the number of children (regardless of their quality) and second, family policy is not meant to take into consideration the utility of children in their parents' eyes.

Henceforth, none of the studies analysed here considers fertility from the angle of the quality of the children. None of them asks the following question: for which children does family policy favour birth? And yet, economists, such as Gary Becker, have insisted on the notion of quality of a child, and shown the opposing relationship it has with the quantity of children: in some households, it has been deliberately decided to have fewer children in order to take better care of them. Thus, would it not be in the State's interest (for example, in terms of social contributions related to income, but also of national productivity) to act in favour of the quality of children, allocating more generous family benefits, but in a less progressive way (or even a digressive way) with the rank of the child? This issue of quality of children comes to mind immediately though, when analysing the impact of some family benefits on withdrawal from the labour market (APE in France, for example). As expected, mothers who choose such a solution are seen to have characteristics that are different from those who prefer to hold on to their professional activity. On average less qualified, they can only hope for a small income, they can fear ending up unemployed and thus, clearly, it is worth their while to accept such family benefits. But these characteristics, which lead them to withdraw from the labour market, are also associated to a human capital that is globally weak, and it is to be feared that they will transmit only a limited human capital to their children. If this implicit supposition, according to which, only the quantity of children matters, and not their quality, were lifted, a totally different family policy would very likely ensue, even if it did not go as far as refusing family allowances to mothers not in possession of a minimum diploma, for example.

Second supposition common to almost all the studies analysed in this report: family policy is to compensate for a part of the child's costs, regardless of the utility parents draw from this child. Now, legitimacy of this type of objective could be denied if it was argued that, the very reason for these parents to have children is that they will provide clear utility. If it is considered that family policy is only legitimate as long as it aims at guaranteeing long-term demographic balance that is viewed as necessary to achieve more general balances (financing retirement for working generations, smooth evolution of school attendance...), compensation for the child's cost is only needed when the utility of children necessary to the country is negative in view of their excessive costs for parents. Lifting this supposition of the child's costs been taken into consideration, while not the utility it provides, could result in family allowance not been given for the first child for example, because of the great utility of a first child in the parents' view. This is the case in France, for this reason, and also for obvious financial

reasons too.

In fact, these two suppositions are not independent. If the objective is of a natalist nature, and at the merging point of the two previous concerns, taking the quality of children into consideration and only compensating for children viewed as too costly in the eyes of their parents, a family policy would emerge, the details of which would be far different, in some respects, from policies in force presently in Belgium, France and Luxembourg. Since concerns of utility would result in benefits been limited, or even cancelled for children of wealthy families, and concerns of a quality nature would lead family benefits to be reduced with the child's rank as well as with the weak human capital parents would have in their possession to transmit to their children, family policy, in opposition with what is presently done in France for instance, should focus its efforts on a generous compensation for the second and third child of middle class families.

But these prospects do not appear to be on the agenda, in France at least, and particularly since, from the beginning, family policy featured marked concerns of horizontal redistribution (even more marked because financing these family benefits was not included in the State budget until later), which legitimises allocating family allowance to the more wealthy families, and also, a desire for vertical redistribution has taken more and more importance, which is in contradiction with a quality concern of children.

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