

Vulnerability and the future of families with children in Europe

Thursday, 1 February 2018 - 10.00-11.30 am

Conference Room D - United Nations Headquarters - New York, NY

Introductory Remarks

Excellencies, distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me being here today, because this event means the conclusion of a huge task that many European academic authorities and civil society representatives have achieved after more than three years of hard work: FamiliesAndSocieties.

FamiliesAndSocieties was a major European research project that investigated the diversity of family forms, relationships and life courses in Europe. It explored the growing complexity of family configurations and transitions across and within European societies and examined their implications for children, women and men with respect to inequalities in life chances, intergenerational relations and care arrangements.

The project was financed by the European Union Seventh Framework Program. It represents 6.5 million in EU contributions and counts with the collaboration of 25 research partners in 15 European countries and 3 transnational civil society actors, including the Wittgenstein Centre of the Vienna Institute of Demography and Austrian Academy of Sciences, the European Large Families Confederation and the International Federation for Family Development, represented today in this meeting.

By the very nature of its composition, FamiliesAndSocieties is therefore the most important project ever carried out on family matters in Europe. It indeed combined a wide range of expertise in social sciences, law and the humanities and partners were very committed to work together, thus offering a multidisciplinary approach to the project.

The three entities present here today have been involved in matters related to foresight activities, synthesis as well as policy implications and dissemination of project's research results:

First, foresight activities: the main objective of foresight activities is to inform policy makers about the impact that family-related policies have on the long run on the family wellbeing and on the fulfillment of family needs.

Second, synthesis and policy implications: the objective involved here two synthesis tasks. The first one is to produce a synthesis of the state-of-the-art, identifying gaps in the research areas and guidelines for research directions. And the second one consisted in producing a synthesis of findings that have emerged from the work packages and to formulate policy recommendations based upon this research and the dissemination meetings among civil society actors and stakeholders.

And third, dissemination of research results, dialogue with stakeholder audiences and family advocacy to disseminate the project findings to the academic community, policy makers, stakeholders, the media and the general public. It is also about enhancing the dialogue between policy makers and civil society actors as well as researchers.

One of the outcomes of the project is the publication that will be analyzed here today, 'Vulnerability and the future of families with children in Europe'. We will listen to the academic expert who coordinated it, Prof. Bernhard Riederer from the Wittgenstein Centre in Vienna, as well as the two representatives of civil society organizations who were also part of this work: Dr. Laszlo Marki of ELFAC, and Dr. Ignacio Socias of IFFD.

With this event, we hope to help in disseminating this results. We believe they can be very important not only for European countries, but also for many others in the rest of the world that can learn from the European experience.

Thanks very much to all for your presence here today and for all your work during the project and now that it has finished.

Let me also thank Mr. Alberto Padova, Chief of the Social Integration Branch at the Division for Social Policy and Development in UN UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, for his acceptance of our offering to moderate this panel.

(...)

To all of you, thanks very much!