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Fertility and the Reconciliation of Family and Working Life: The Case of Greece

The results of the fertility surveys carried out in Greece by the National Center for Social Research in 1983, 1997, 1999, showed that the two-child norm is still quite strong in Greece. Although, the actual number of children has declined from 1.98 in 1983 to 1.3 in 1999, the mean expected family size is still at the same levels (2.3 in 1983 and in 1999) and the same trend is observed for the “ideal” number of children (2.7 in 1983 and in 1999).

The analysis of the result of all the above surveys and of a recent study on family policies on 2004, show that an effective family-demographic policy in Greece should focus on the increase of family income and most importantly on the reconciliation of family and working life of couples.

The decision of women to work is the result of a complex process involving value judgments and attitudes regarding their opportunity cost, the compatibility between familial and non-familial roles, their sex-role attitudes and their job commitment.

However, it has to be emphasized that female employment can be compatible with motherhood when there is efficient state support for the reconciliation of family and working life (childcare services, paid parental leaves, etc.), and/or if there is help with childcare/childrearing from other family members. However, female employment can have a positive effect upon fertility, since it increases the family income and consequently can allow the couple to have the desired number of children.

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