

WELLCHI NETWORK Workshop 2:  
**“Which are the provisions in Family Law that foster  
children’s well-being and which kind of reforms should  
be envisaged in this respect”**

**INSTITUTE FOR LEGAL STUDIES –  
BULGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES  
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**Poverty  
in Southern Europe  
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## Main themes of this paper

- In the context of general EU patterns, it deals with the emergence of problems associated with lone parenthood in Southern European societies
- Emerging trend towards cross-class divorce
- Deterioration of the well-being of families and their children because of poverty growth
- Low capacity of Southern welfare states to fight against child poverty


## Individualisation

### Concept

Process by which individuals tend to become viable units of social reproduction, since marriage is less an act of economic necessity and more a question of personal choice.

### Two main dimensions

 Economic and residential autonomy owing to income from employment for most adult people.

 Citizenship social rights and individual dealings with public administrations.

# Causes of child poverty growth

Accumulation of (old) class and (new) family structure risks →

Increasing female labour market participation →

Transition from male breadwinner family model to double income family regime →

- Growth of marital instability
- Growth of fertility outside marriage

→ Increase of single parenthood

## Processes of social polarisation affecting children's well-being

- Growth of single parenthood.
- Low rates of economic activity of women with lesser educational attainment because cost of family services is too high with respect to their potential salaries
- Men tend to prefer women with high income potential → Increasing educational homogamy. Accumulation of advantages (and disadvantages) in married or cohabiting couples

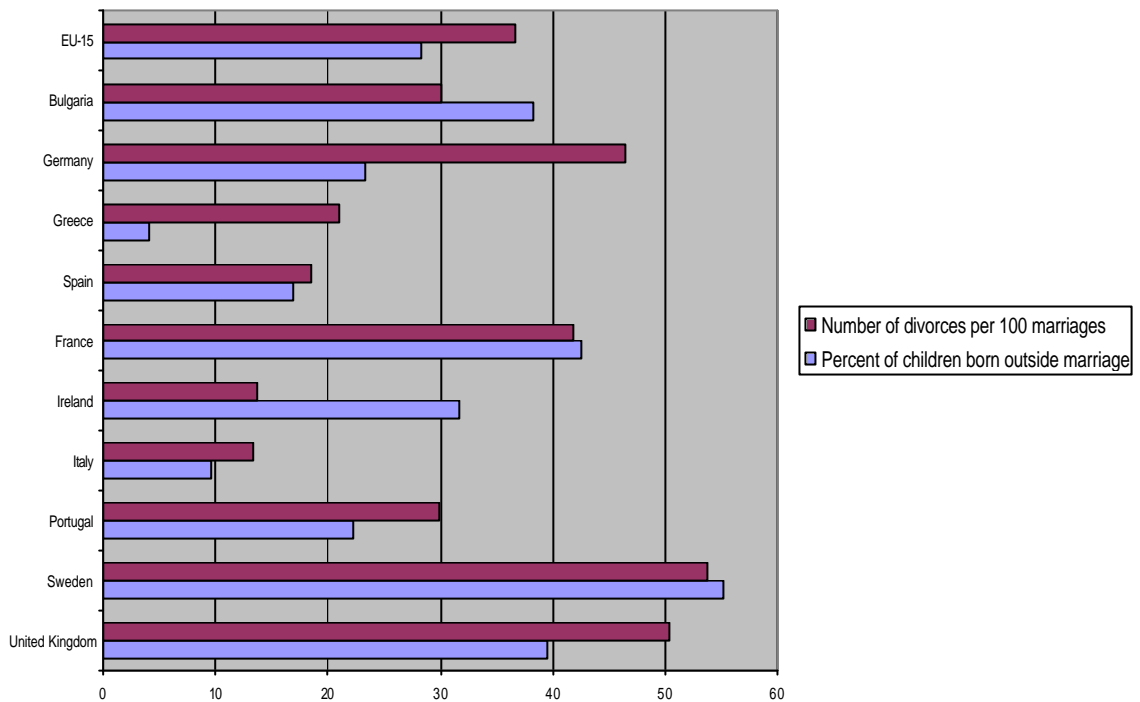
## **Some effects of these processes**

- When average standard of living takes for granted double income, households with a single breadwinner are facing higher poverty risks.
- Adverse effects are added up: (1) lone parents are in serious trouble to pay for family services they badly need; (2) for similar reasons, mothers with low educational attainment are deterred from seeking employment; (3) it is likely that their partners get also low qualification jobs.

## **Individualisation and (child) poverty**

- Small-size households allow less scale economies
- Persistence of gender inequalities involve more poverty risks for households headed by women
- A more individualised society should facilitate more intergenerational mobility. However,
  - Social closure and lasting social inheritance are a serious barrier to meritocracy
  - Increasing homogamy brings about social polarisation

Indicators of family change in selected European countries, 2000



## Different types of conjugal break-ups

Type of union

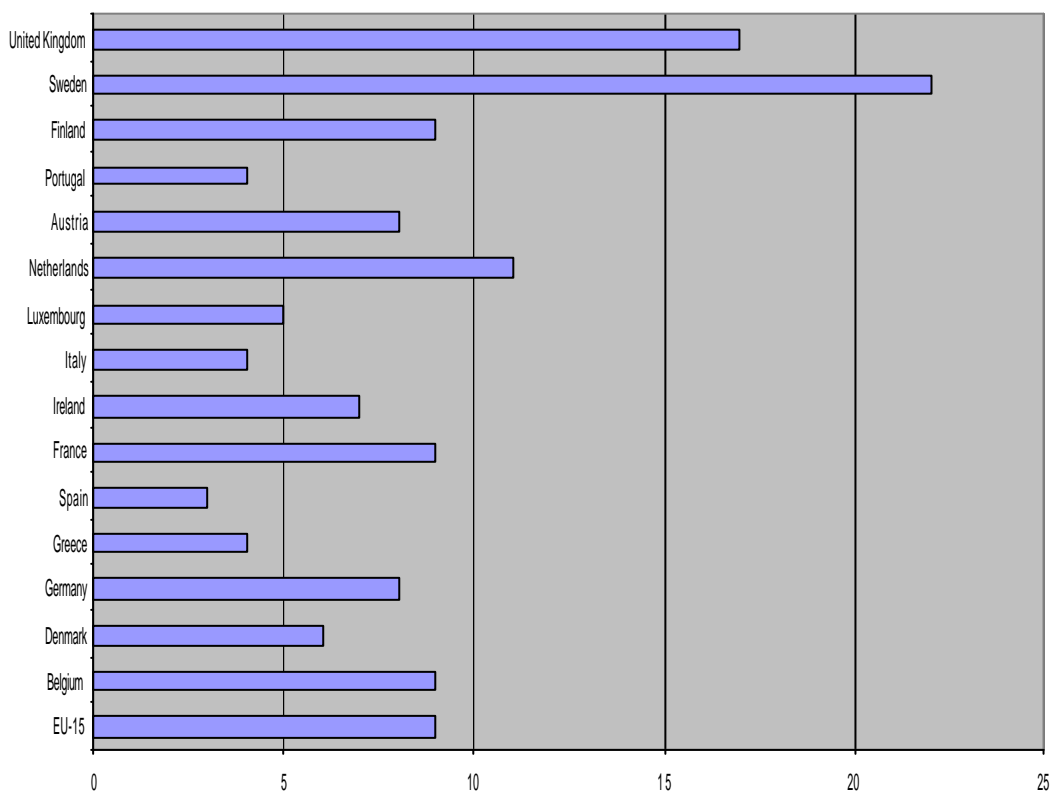
Type of break-up

- |              |                    |
|--------------|--------------------|
| • Consensual | • Informal         |
| • Marriage   | • Informal         |
| • Marriage   | • Legal separation |
| • Marriage   | • Divorce          |

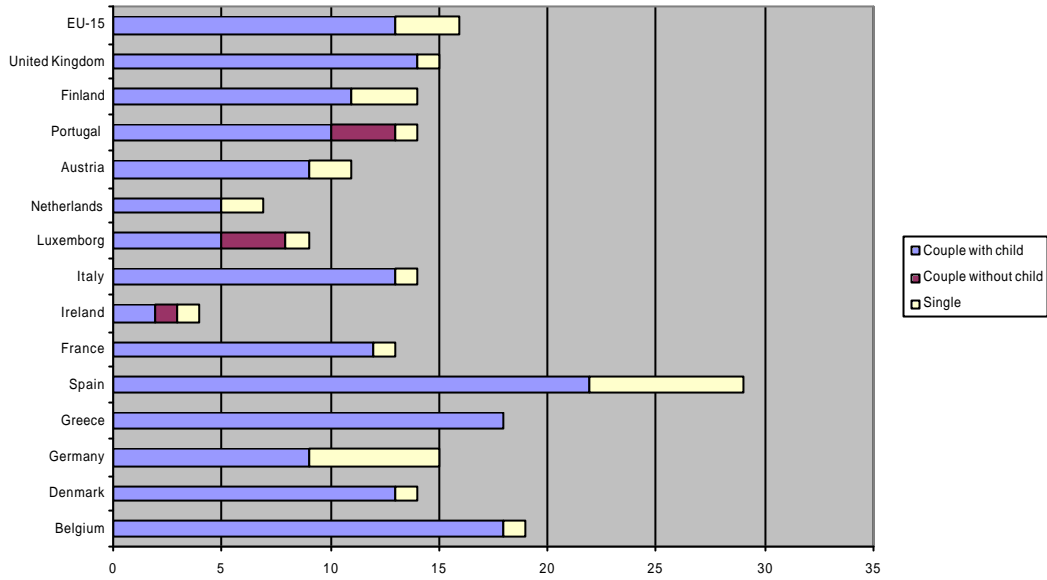
# Lack of comparable data in the European Union

- Maintenance payments
- Break-up of consensual unions  
(Panel data)
- Flux of divorces

**Lone parent households as percentage of all households with dependent children, European Union-15, 2001**

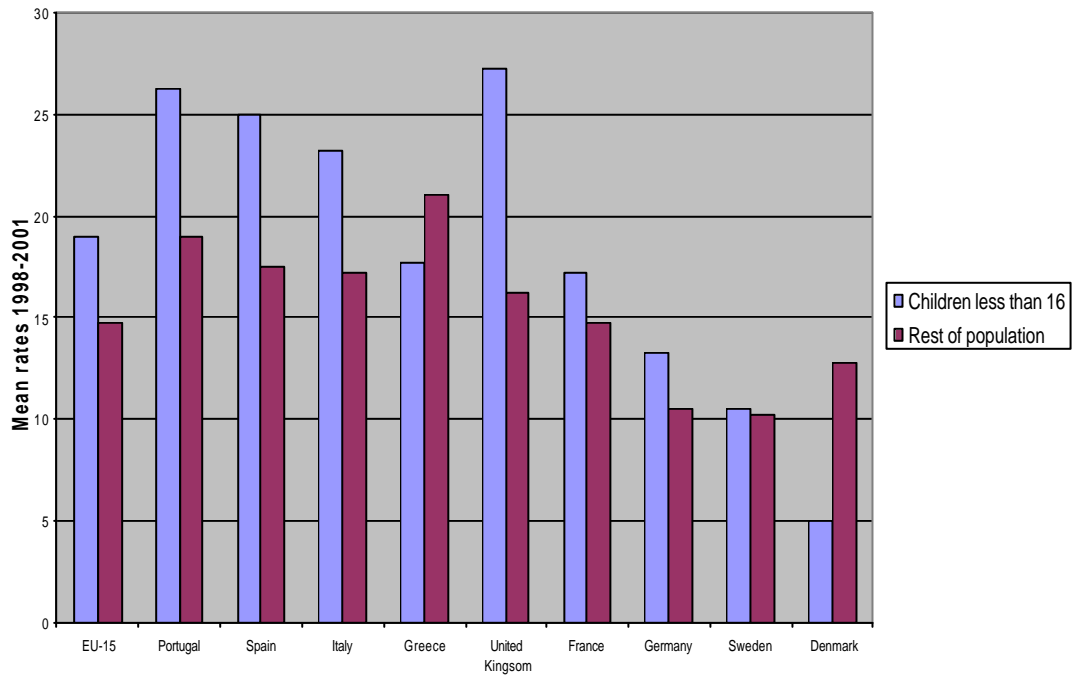


**Breakdown of lone parents in current year by situation  
in the year before other than lone parenthood  
European Union, 2001**

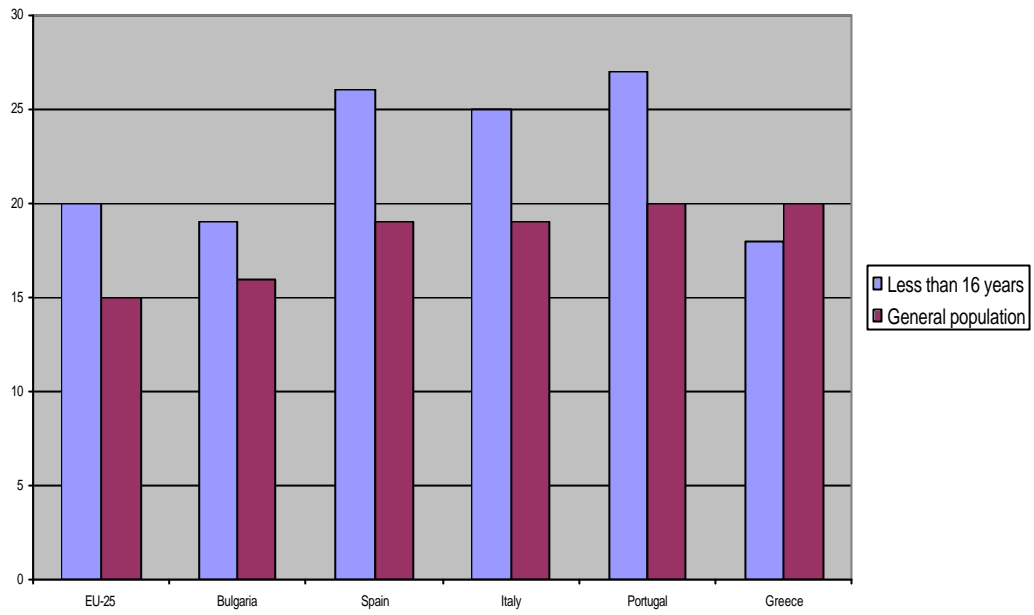


Source: European Community Household Panel

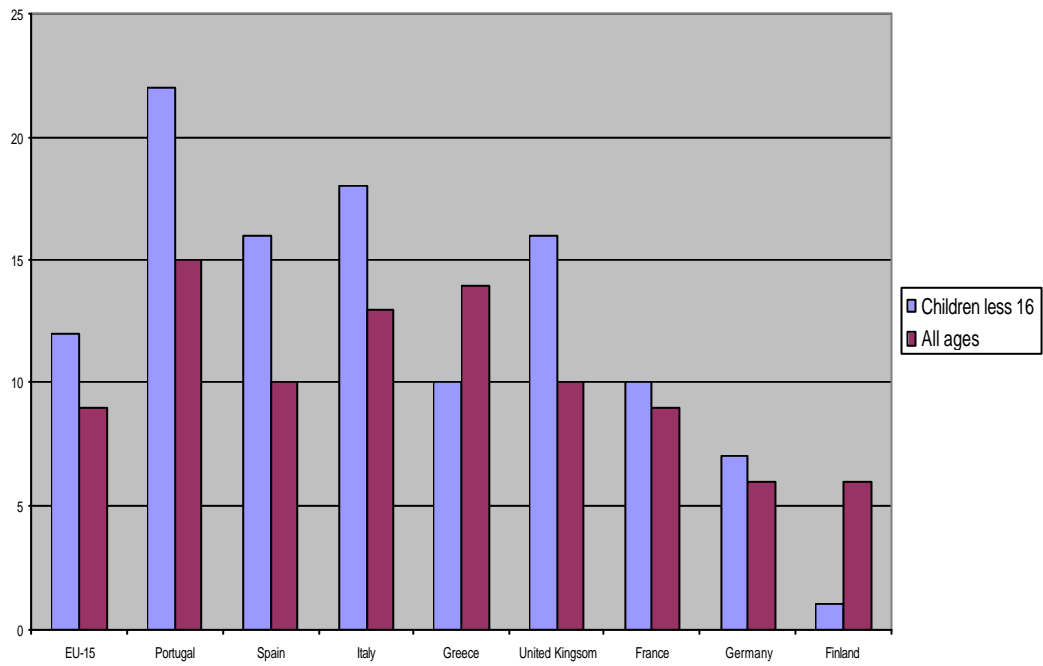
**Rates of child and general poverty in selected EU countries, 1998-2001**



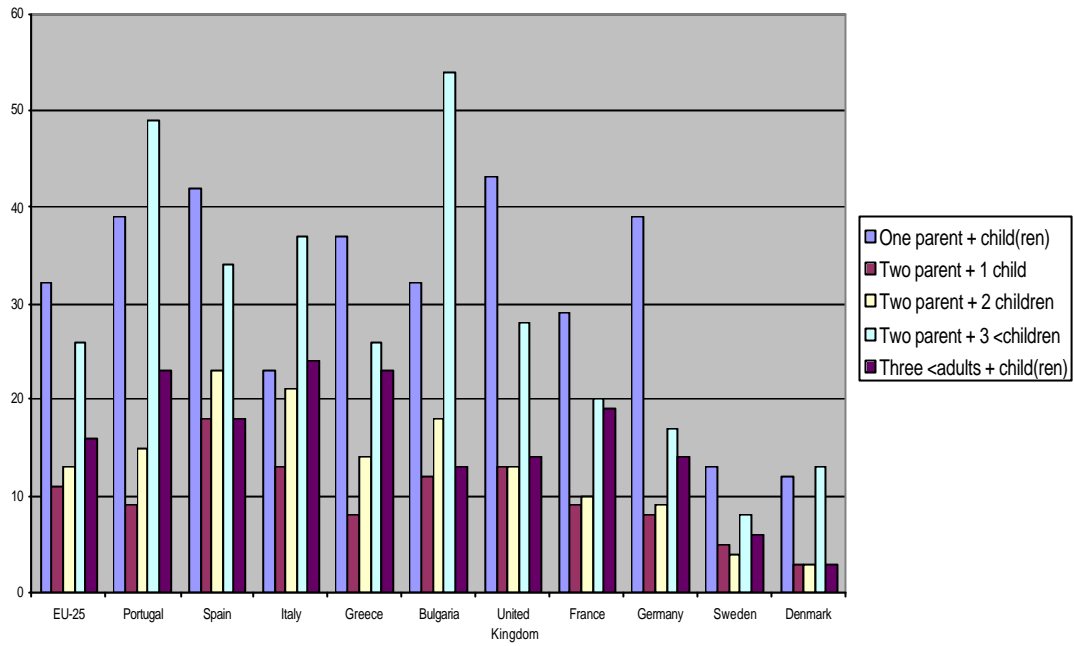
Child and general poverty rates  
Southern European countries, 2001



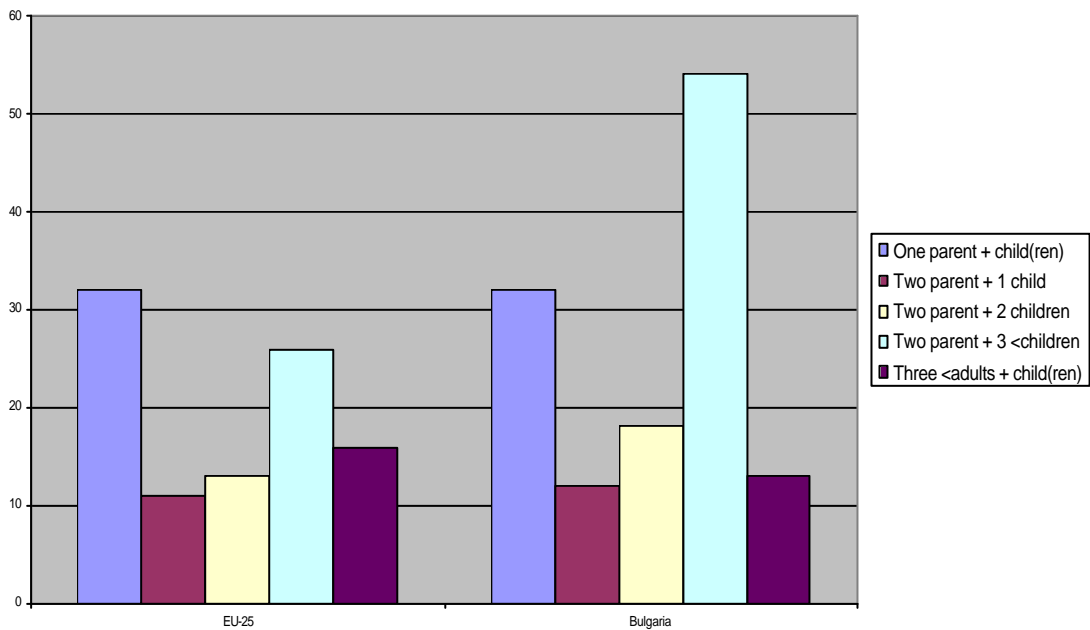
Rates of persistent child and general poverty in selected EU countries, 2001



**Rates of poverty by types of household with dependent children  
Selected European countries, 2001**



**Rates of poverty by household types with dependent children  
Bulgaria and EU-25, 2001**



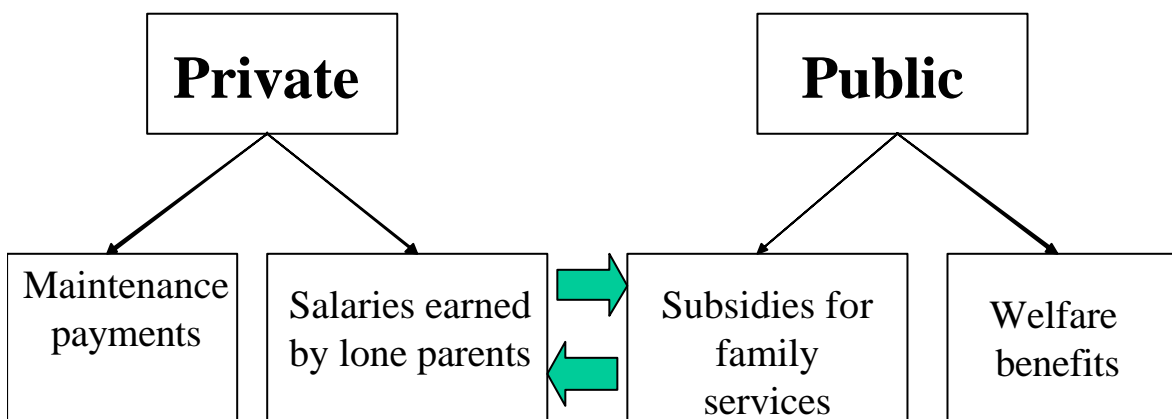
# Trade-off between private and public strategies in order to care for the well-being of children

**A better coordination is needed among researchers and policy-makers in two akin but distant institutional fields**

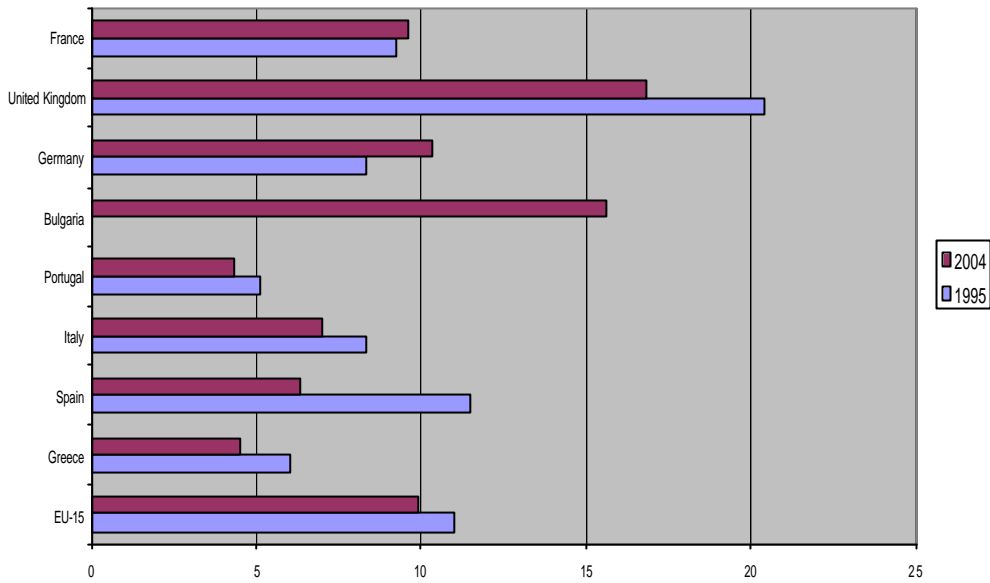
- Family law
- Social and family policies

Harmonisation of both legal norms and statistical sources becomes essential

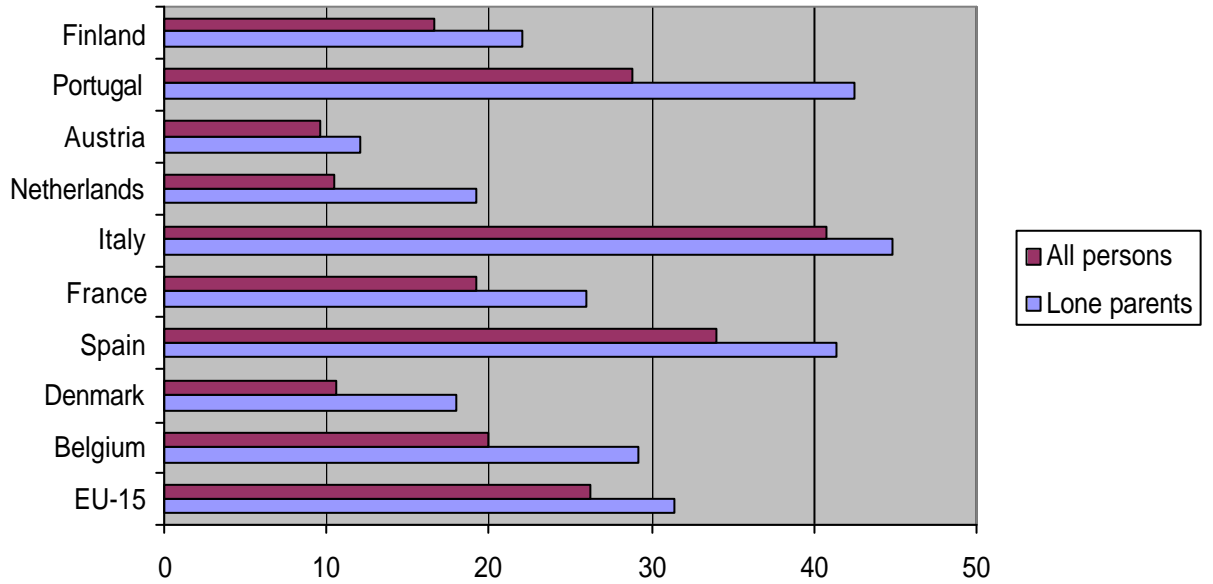
## Different sources of income for lone parents



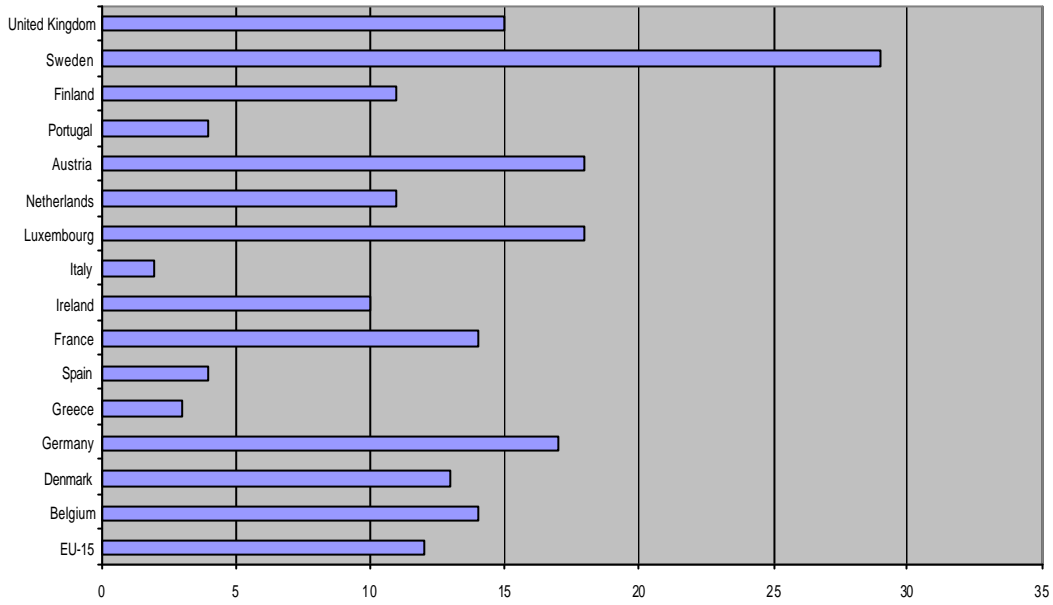
Evolution of the share of children 0-17 living in jobless households  
Selected European countries, 2004



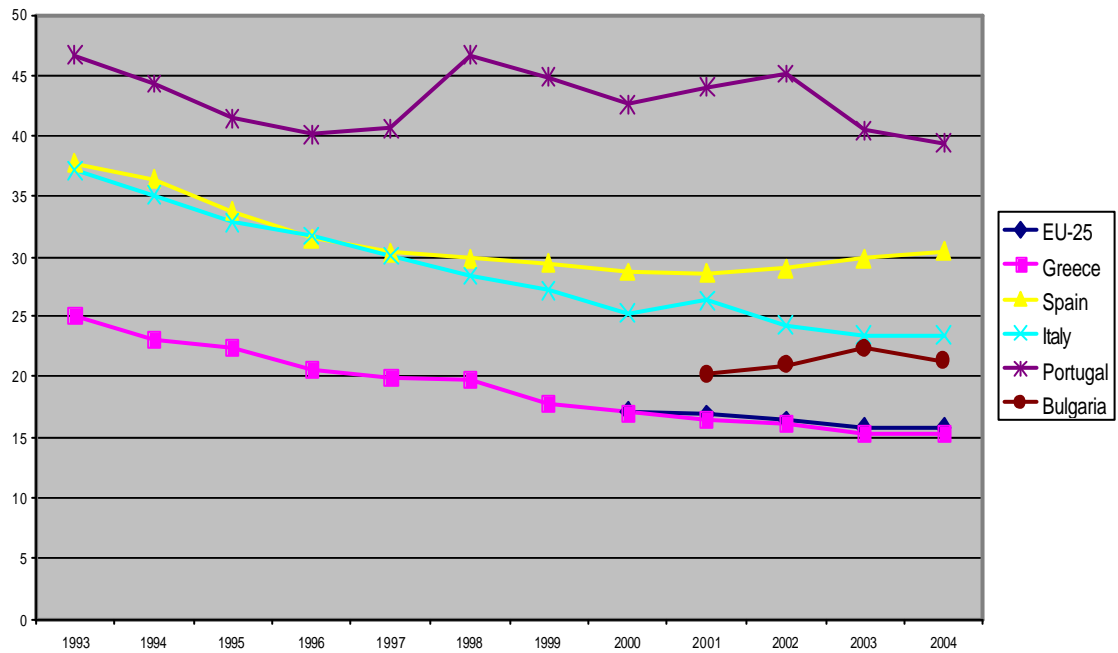
Levels of dissatisfaction with main activity  
for 'single' lone parents and all persons aged 25-49  
Selected EU-15 countries, mean 1997-2001



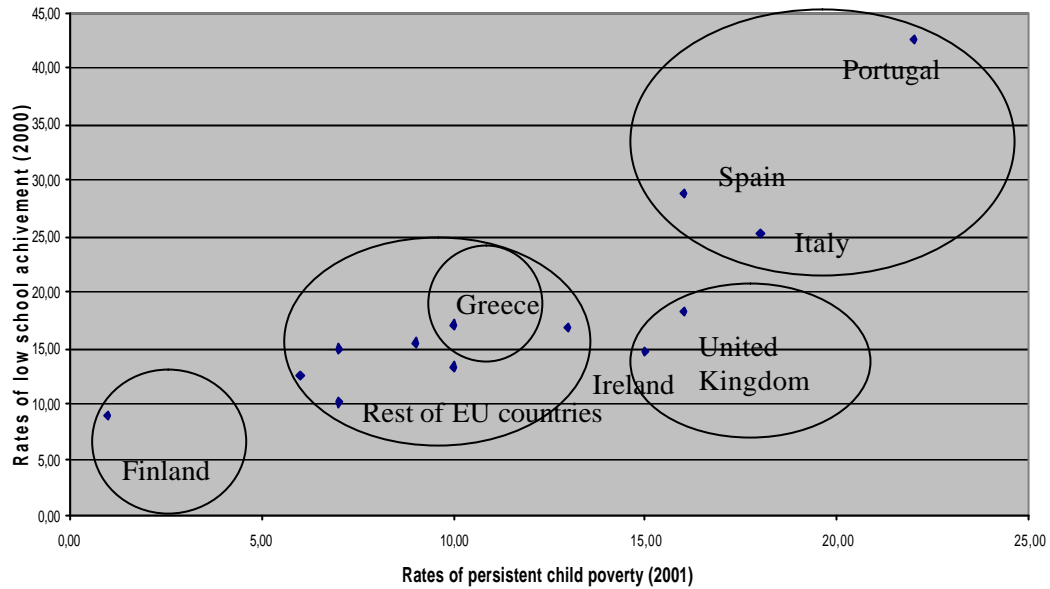
Gap between rates of child poverty before and after monetary transfers (excluding pensions)  
European Union, 2001



Evolution of early school leaving  
Southern European countries, 1993-2004



Relationship between rates of persistent child poverty  
and rates of early school leaving  
European Union, 2000-2001



## Factors of preservation against poverty for lone parents in Southern Europe

- Selective middle-class vs. cross-class divorce
- Complex vs. 'single' lone-parent households (Pooling of monetary and caring resources by sharing the household with other kin vs. individualisation of lone-parenthood)
- Evolution of these factors not well-known

# Conclusions

- The growth of family diversity calls for the implementation of policies of equal opportunity for all children and requires combatting any kind of possible discrimination among them, irrespective of the type of family households in which they live
- Low efficiency of welfare states in Southern Europe and small interest of their civil societies in dealing with child poverty-related problems