

**FIRST ISA FORUM OF SOCIOLOGY**

**Sociological research and public debate**

**Barcelona, Spain**

**September 5 – 8 | 2008**

**Research Committee on Women in Society (RC32)**

Joint Session 2: The Challenges of women's participation/exclusion in public and private contexts

**- WORKING PAPER -**

**New meanings of the family in Europe: gender relations between ideology and practice**

Anália Torres, Rui Brites, Bernardo Coelho, Inês Cardoso, with Paula Jerónimo

# New meanings of the family in Europe: gender relations between ideology and practice

Anália Torres<sup>1</sup>, Rui Brites<sup>2</sup>, Bernardo Coelho<sup>3</sup> and Inês Cardoso<sup>4</sup> with Paula Jerónimo<sup>5</sup>

## | Introduction

Based on the main discussions about orientations to work and care and on previous research results, we intend to contribute to enlighten regularities and singularities among European countries. Several other research results showed already that orientations to work and care differ across Europe. Thus, besides mapping them it is important to identify and access the interplay between structural, institutional and cultural determinants of orientations (Haas, 2005) and trying to find the more relevant for explaining country diversity.

We pay attention to orientations to work and care by briefly analyzing in a cross country perspective gender roles in Europe as a fundamental ideological background for the emergence of material and practical orientations.

---

<sup>1</sup> Professor in the Department of Sociology at ISCTE (Lisbon University Institute) in Lisbon, researcher at CIES/ISCTE. ([analia.torres@iscte.pt](mailto:analia.torres@iscte.pt)), member as senior research of the Portuguese team of the European Social Survey and coordinates the Portuguese team for *Social Quality and the Changing relationships between work, care and welfare in Europe e and welfare in Europe, (Workcare)*, research project within the 6th FP.

<sup>2</sup> Professor of Data Analysis in the Department of Quantitative Methods at ISCTE and researcher at CIES-ISCTE working since 2002 with European Social Survey data.

<sup>3</sup> Researcher at CIES/ISCTE (Lisbon University Institute) ([bernardo.coelho@iscte.pt](mailto:bernardo.coelho@iscte.pt)), member of CIES for the ESS and member of the Portuguese team of *Workcare Project*. Post-graduate student in PhD program in sociology at ISCTE (Lisbon University Institute).

<sup>4</sup> Researcher at CIES/ISCTE ([ines.cardoso@iscte.pt](mailto:ines.cardoso@iscte.pt)) member of CIES for the ESS and member of the Portuguese team of *Workcare Project*.

<sup>5</sup> Researcher at CIES/ISCTE ([paula.jeronimo@iscte.pt](mailto:paula.jeronimo@iscte.pt)) member of CIES for the ESS

Therborn, in a perspective of the XX century, argues that crediting urbanization and industrialization alone with the role of providing the principal motor for the family changes observed in the last hundred years does not seem sufficient to understand these changes. Therborn takes the example of the pioneering role played by Scandinavian countries in certain transformations that, with regard to the family, are today considered as the “norm” in other European countries<sup>6</sup> – gender equality in marriage, the freedom to choose a partner, the greater value given to individual rights and a secular vision of conjugality. In accordance with this, he tends to give pre-eminence to political, cultural and ideological factors such as strong secularization to explain the differences in the European family system that can be observed between countries (Therborn, 2004: 78). The greater or lesser influence of secularization on topics associated with the family, the existence or absence of policies on gender equality or sexuality is also a factor to be taken into account in explaining these differences.

For Hakim (2000, 2003) orientations, attitudes and preferences are very relevant because they tend to explain the choices made by individuals in work care arrangements. But testing Hakim’s preferences theory (based on ISSP data) Crompton and Lyonette (2005a) showed that life style’s preferences, choices or attitudes towards mothers’ employment, were not the main factors determining work and care arrangements. Moreover they distinguish between specific arrangements and orientations, the former being influenced also by institutional and structural factors that can be different from the factors influencing attitudes or orientations. They conclude that individuals and couples choices are the result of a complex inter-relation of attitudes and practical constraints and are made according to several contextual factors like labour market conditions, individual’s qualifications and education attained or the presence of children at home.

These recent results actualize other critiques regarding preference’s theory like the ones made by a group of British sociologists (Ginn, et al., 1996) that stated, among other issues, the commitment and orientation to work of British women at the same time

---

<sup>6</sup> The Swedish author explains that when some of the basic legislation on marriage, the family and women’s rights was applied in Scandinavian countries at the very beginning of the 20th century, a large part of the working population was still engaged in agriculture (Therborn, 2004: 77). Accordingly, he tends to question the acknowledgment of urbanisation and industrialisation, made in particular by W. Goode, as the fundamental factors in the change in family structures in the world (Goode, 1963).

they shed light over issues like childcare costs and availability and relating them to part-time's job "choice" and "satisfaction" with it. More recent results actualize and reinforce these critiques (Torres, Hass, Steiber and Brites, 2007; Torres, Mendes and Lapa, 2007) not only for Britain but for all Europe.

In fact, from different sources as the results from European Social Survey 2002 and 2004 or Eurobarometer 2003 showed very clearly the attachment or commitment of women and mothers to work as well as the perception of difficulties raised by part-time jobs. It is also important to stress that contrary to Hakim's assumptions the results of EB 2003 show that mothers of pre-school and school children don't reveal less commitment to their jobs than women nor men and fathers.

### **The double division of work: sexual division of paid and unpaid work**

Rosemary Crompton and Clare Lyonette (2005b) analysed work-life "balance" in Europe from the work-family conflict perspective, with ISSP, 2002, data, namely indicators<sup>7</sup> related to work and family stress and pressure. Their main result shows that work-family conflict vary within national, individual and family circumstances, reflecting the "availability of state-provided extra family supports for caring and also a wider economic and labour market policies that will include tax systems, employment protections and regulations, etc."

In contrast with the Scandinavian countries, in Britain, France and Portugal there is no evidence of state policies that explicitly encourage men to take on a larger share of domestic work – so it is expected that in this latter countries there will be a stronger work-family conflict. And in fact their analysis revealed that the institutional and policy context in countries such as Finland and Norway does have a positive impact on individual levels of work-life conflict. The pressure was stronger at the workplace than at home and especially among women, young and high qualified workers and families with children.

---

<sup>7</sup> A work-life conflict scale was constructed, using four items from the survey (respondents were asked to indicate for each item whether this occurred several times a week, several times a month, once or twice, or never. Higher scores indicate higher work-life conflict). *I have come home from work too tired to do the chores which need to be done; It has been difficult for me to fulfil my family responsibilities because of the amount of time I spent on my job ;I have arrived at work too tired to function well because of the household work I had done .I have found it difficult to concentrate at work because of my family responsibilities.*

Sustaining a “gender centred” approach to welfare state change, Jane Lewis points out that the male breadwinner model has eroded but the social reality is still far from a family comprised of self-sufficient, autonomous individuals. While women’s behaviour has changed substantially in respect of paid work, they still perform the bulk of unpaid care work. The monies allocated to care are considerably less than those designed to get people into work and make work pay. The promotion of care services is more likely to promote women’s paid work than cash payments for care leaves. Anything to do with care tends to be poorly valued. Care continues to be associated with women rather than with both the sexes, and carers are profoundly disadvantaged. The fate of women depends on what provisions are made for unpaid care work. A reorientation of policies is sustained by the author that suggests the need to value care activities with an alternative perspective (capabilities approach).

In a different approach by Arlie Hochschild, policies tend to imagine work and family as two different spheres of social reality. They see the communications between them, but don’t understand that they are lived in a continuum by the people in their daily lives. On daily lives they have fluid borders. Hochschild (2000) claims not only the continuum between work and family but also a reverse in the social representations we have about these two spheres. Although traditionally we tend to associate family with a more pleasant place to be, out of the workplace regular stress, the author, in her study about an American family friend policy company, realised that things may be the other way around. Several employees’ discourses emphasized the idea that work can in fact be the peaceful escape from the tormented family life. The thesis of her book is that “the worlds of home and work have themselves undergone momentous changes over the last thirty years, while our ways of thinking about them have not”. Moreover, a result that has been very consensual over decades of research on family field is that women who do paid work feel less depressed, think better of themselves and are more satisfied with life than women who don’t do paid work (Hochschild, 2000: Torres, 2004).

Housework division acquires particular relevance, as it constitutes a paradigmatic example of the gender ideology persistence and its dominance upon other structural changes (Amâncio, 2007). This structure attains several forms, depending on historical moments and cultural contexts and is not reducible to the classical dichotomy between paid work in the public sphere and unpaid work in the private sphere,

embodying besides, power hierarchies and symbolic meanings which influence practices (Connell, 2005).

We perceive that there is a consensual trend across Europe in the field of values, namely a rejection of traditional gender roles in the family. We observe a change in the attitudes towards family division of work. Family relations are no longer marked by the difference between the expressive and domestic role of the woman, by one hand, and the instrumental and public role of the man, by the other. Family relations are based on the relational and equalitarian model centered in the discovery of the individual, in his self-construction, inside the private universe chosen by him (Wall, 2007).

This movement towards equality is mostly composed by small and imperceptible everyday changes (Sullivan, 2004). In this sense, interpreting the family routine organization with all its repetitions, allows us to simultaneously, apprehend processes of change and incongruity between discourses committed to change and reproductive practices. Daily negotiations and conflicts between men and women around domestic tasks play on a wider social process, which involves slow changes in the ideals and in the individuals' real life circumstances.

It is in private life, namely in daily interactions, that individuals produce gender, as an active reconstruction and as a resistance to the reproduction of the existing normative constructions (Butler, 2004; Sullivan, 2004). Family and intimate relationships constitute the central core of femininity and masculinity conceptions (Amâncio, 2007). Gender is approached as a domination element and simultaneously a sexual identity element. Though we understand that domestic tasks, since they possess a sexual connotation, bring about a social meaning, knowing that some of them are considered as feminine and others as masculine. Individuals will perform the tasks as an identity construction, preferring those which legitimize their sexual identity and will make them feel good in their gender, defining themselves as men and women.

## Methodology and data

Trying to answer our questions and enlightening our starting point of view over European orientations to work and care, we mobilize mainly European Social Survey data from three different rounds (2002, 2004 and 2006) and complementary data from other sources like the Eurobarometer 2003. The combination of these different data sources allow us to better portrait, access and understand regularities and singularities among European countries. Other research background on childcare, marital life and the division of paid and unpaid labour between men and women was also mobilised<sup>8</sup>.

## Orientations to work and care: European overview

### Work and family as main dimensions to personal projects

Although research has already shown that the differences within the sexes are much more important than those between them, the truth is that the latter are frequently inflated in a manner that tends to essentialize the biological differences between women and men (Amâncio, 1994; Kimmel, 2000; Torres and Brites, 2006). In fact, in contrast to the common view and the image portrayed in airport best-sellers, which constantly tell us that women and men come from different planets, close study of the differences between the two allow us to conclude, with some surprise, that as Connell states: “(...) the main finding, from about eighty years of research, is a massive psychological similarity between women and men in the population studied by psychologists. Clear-

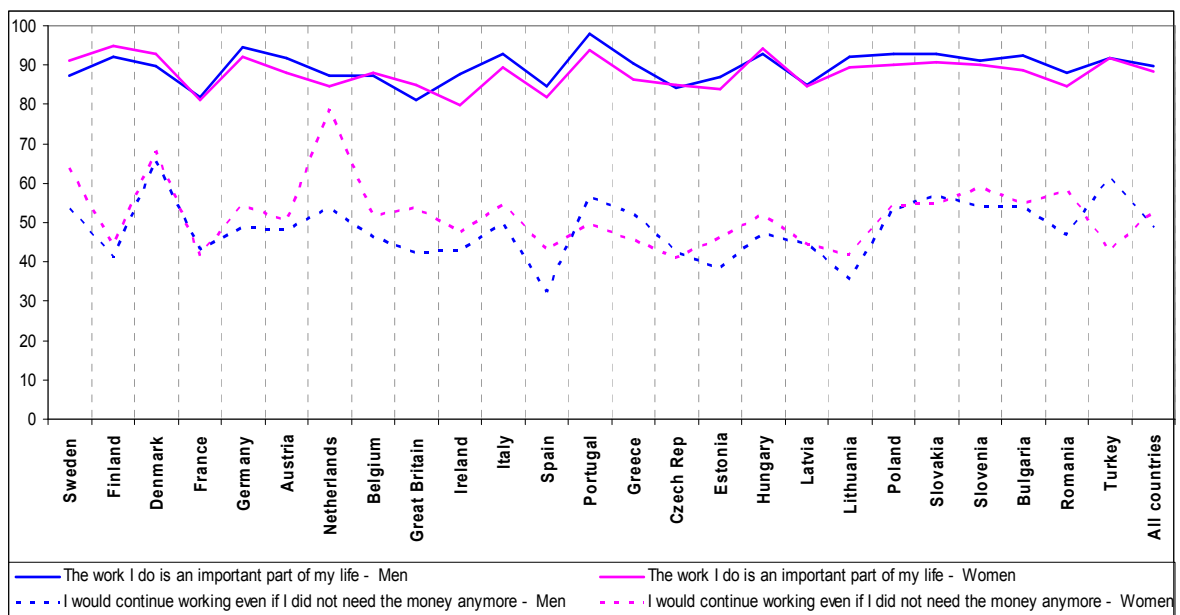
---

<sup>8</sup> Several researches constitute this background: within the European Research Network *Social policies and the division of paid and unpaid work between men and women* we carried out two surveys: a survey applied in 1997 to a sample of around 500 households of parents of at least one child until 10 years old in the area of Lisbon (Great Lisbon); another survey at National level applied in 1999 to 1700 men and women a representative sample of the population resident in Portugal aged between 20 and 50. Results from qualitative research about marriage, marital life and work carried out in Lisbon in mid-nineties consisting on in depth interviews of more than 36 couples of men and women interviewed separately in Lisbon about marriage, marital life and work (mid-nineties) were also useful. And more recently *Work, Family, Gender Equality and Social Policies: European transformations from a comparative perspective* research dealing not only with quantitative European survey data but also with qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews to couples in different towns in Portugal (Porto, Lisbon and Leiria).

cut block differences are few, and confined to restricted topics”. (Connell, 1987: 170)<sup>9</sup>. Connell (2005) reaffirms his rejection of the “dichotomy of the character” of men and women on the basis of gender differences and discusses more recent research results

Contradicting the stereotypes, women tend to attribute the same importance to work as men do. Work is a value in itself, making part of a feminine social identity, even in countries where there is a lower participation of women in the labour market. The discrepancies between the sexes are far narrower than the differences between countries. For men to family is important.

**Figure 1. Work attachment for working men and women (%) 2003**

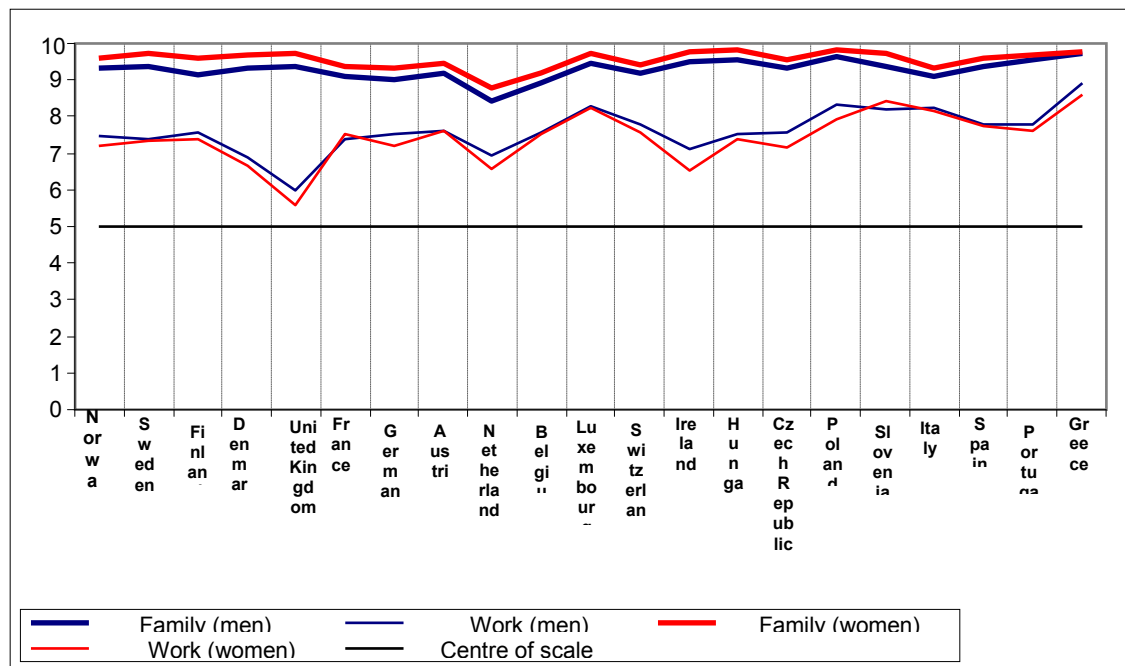


EB 60.3 and CCEB 2003

<sup>9</sup> Even in an analysis of such characteristics as the distribution of attributes connected with masculinity and femininity, it can be seen that, despite the differences in averages, the overlapping of characteristics is much greater than the distance and difference between them. As Kimmel also shows: “In fact, in virtually all the research that has been done on the attributes associated with masculinity or femininity, the differences among women and men are far greater than the mean differences between women and men” (Kimmel, 2000: 15).



**Figure 2. The importance of family and work in Europe**



ESS (Round 1) 2002

Family is the main sphere of personal investment both for men and women. Family is not more important in the south than in other countries. It is a taken-for-granted value for each of the countries of the ESS. What changes within Europe is the family models, the meanings and forms of investment in the family. The South and the East with more traditional views mainly related to family gender roles.

Nevertheless, the importance of feelings and emotional life - family, friends, leisure - is globally stressed everywhere. Women are more modern than men, especially accounting for family gender roles, in all Europe.

But there are contradictions between these kind of answers with other data. When we ask questions formulating them in a gender biased perspective we have answers that tend to reproduce stereotypes. If we ask simply addressing the individual – man or woman – they tend to respond as they feel for themselves. (For “me” work is very important but for other women probably not so much...).

The general trend is the rejection of very classical and traditional gender stereotypes (men’s job is more important than women's or couple staying together for the sake of the children). But gender discrimination still stands (women should be prepared to sacrifice their paid work for the sake of the family).

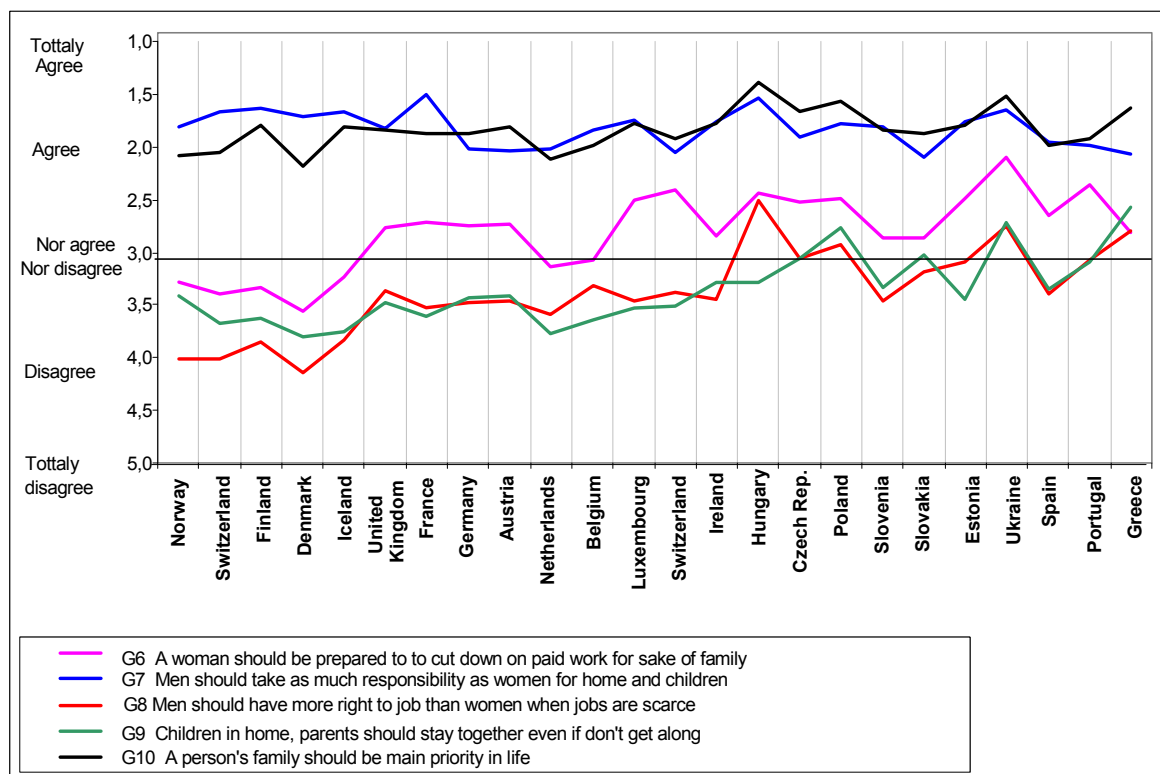
## Orientations to work and care and gender roles

Some authors claim that, regarding work and family, women choose a life style according to their preferences. Others have shown that structural, institutional and cultural constraints shape “preferences”. Choices seem though constrained.

We have seen that work and family are dimensions of social identity for both women and men. Women “prefer” to work professionally and both men and women desire a strong participation of men in family and childcare. The management of these personal investments (work + family) is introducing new meanings of family, new forms gender relations in family.

Having as background the debate around preferences theory we can ask: What feeds the emergence of new meanings of the family? How can we define these new meanings?

**Figure 3: New meanings of the family (ESS, round 2, 2004)**



From this chart we can draw some European patterns. First, there is a general consensus and very high agreement about the idea that *a person's family should be main*

*priority in life* and that *men should take as much responsibility as women for home and children*.

The wider agreement with the first statement isn't unexpected. We had already observed the predominance given to family in all countries. The second statement brings however some innovation: in the ideological plan, Europeans tend to adopt an equalitarian perspective and to reject a traditional vision of men and women's roles in the family. We are observing a change in symbolic representations and images associated to masculinity and paternity, which is reflected in the growing literature dedicated to the "engaged fathers", who participate more intensely in the care of children, as an opposition to the traditional role of breadwinner (Sullivan, 2004).

Secondly, we found what can be called an intermediary position, or less defined position about the idea that *a woman should be prepared to cut down on paid work for sake of family's well-being* - 47% of the European agree. But we observe marked differences among countries, Scandinavian tend to reject but the majority is near the middle or undefined point (nor agree nor disagree), and some tend to the agreement.

This is the "less rejected" idea, regarding that the agreement overcomes the 50% of answers in various countries.

When asked if *Men should have more right to job than women when jobs are scarce* it became quite clear for the majority of the Europeans, the rejection of the sacrifice of the female professional work in favour of men (52,9%). Rejection is strong and the two sexes are always very close together. Apparently, the majority of European doesn't support the sacrifice of women in favour of men. However we must account that an unequal vision in what concerns the access to paid work (which reflects a conservative attitude) increases as long as we move from the North to the South of Europe.

European don't appreciate the idea of women's sacrifice in favour of men (in the labour market access) but they seem to tolerate a little better – particularly in the South and Eastern countries – the idea that a woman should sacrifice herself in favour of the family well-being. We can see that there is a major difference between countries than between sexes.

The idea of the indissolubility of marriage due to the existence of children – *Children in home, parents should stay together even if don't get along* - is also, globally, rejected (52,2%). This is again an idea linked to a conservative attitude and, although being globally rejected, it reaches a medium agreement in the South and East

countries. Besides, this is the case where the sexes are more distant from each other, with men adopting more conservative positions than women.

In this descriptive analysis we must look at distinction between countries. Nordic countries express a much clear position of rejection, while the others have more difficulty in standing for or against the statements. We may then understand that Nordic countries present very consistent positions of disagreement towards the three statements. In the remaining countries – South and Enlargement – the figures of agreement are around half of the sample, reflecting more ambiguous predispositions and with a more conservative trend in what concerns work-family relation.

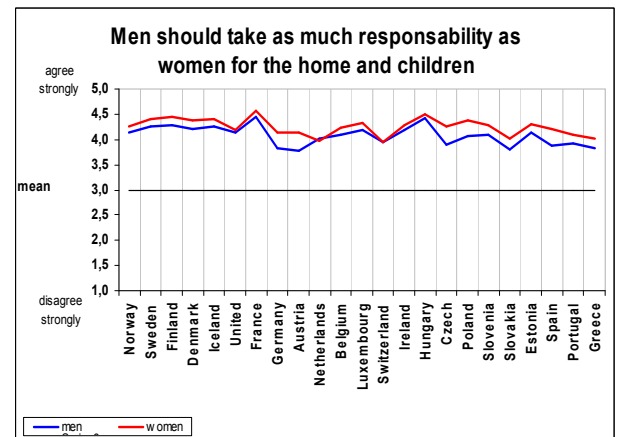
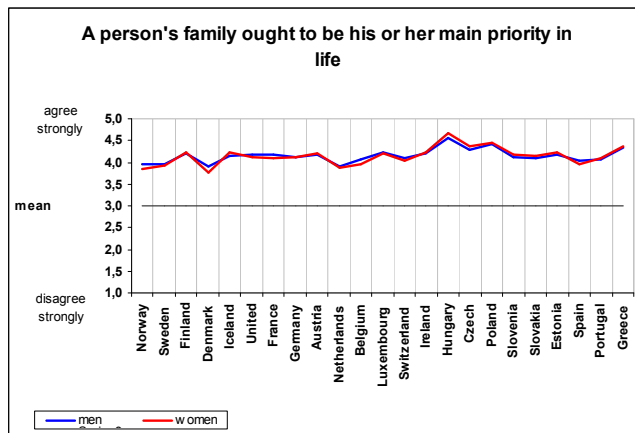
It looks like the idea that gender equality is a more deep-rooted reality in the Nordic countries is confirmed.

The general trend is the rejection of very classical and traditional gender stereotypes; this is particular evident on the positioning of both men and women about the priority of men in labour market integration. But gender discrimination and reproduction of traditional gender roles and values still stands, with results showing a certain level of female incorporation of gender stereotypes. Namely those concerned with the female naturalized competences for care and family responsibilities.

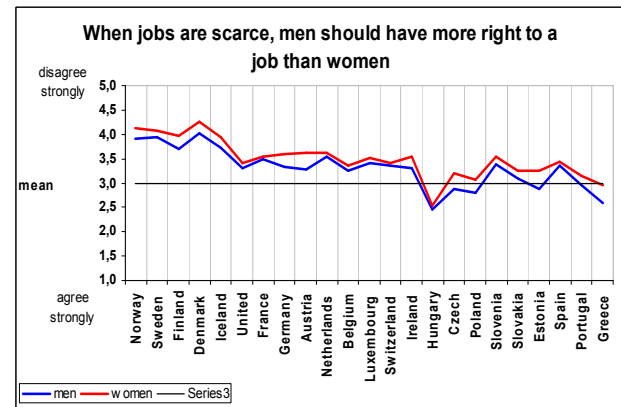
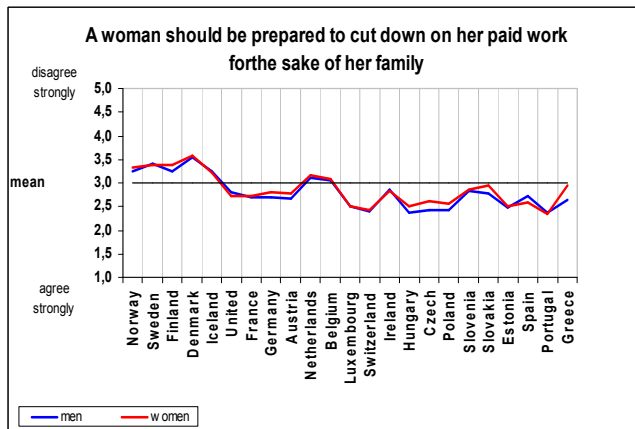
Due to the persistence of the traditional gender values is not difficult to understand that across Europe women take more modern positions than men, especially accounting for family gender roles. This more modern and egalitarian positioning of women reveals the defense of women as subjects of their own life projects, both professional and emotional.

The coexistence of new egalitarian trends and the persistence of more traditional gender values is not only the result of the process of change going on in gender relations in the family scenario, and these transformations don't occur without some set backs or contradictory movements because there are implicit profound transformations about the meaning of being man and women and gender normativity; but also these results can be the effect of the way questions are asked. When we ask questions formulated in a gender biased perspective we have answers that tend to reproduce stereotypes. That is if questions are formulated in a stereotypical way answers will also be stereotypical, reproducing more traditional gender norms and values. On the other way, if questions address the individual, man and women tend to respond as they feel for themselves (For "me" work is very important but for other women probably not so much...).

**Figure 4: New meanings of the family by gender**



ESS 2004



ESS 2004

ESS 2004

Looking now at the same questions but trying to differentiate the answers for both sexes we find out that there are significant gender differences<sup>10</sup>, but they are small and not enough to endorse the naturalized view on gender differences, namely those setting apart men and women in different social worlds: paid work as a masculine universe and the family as a female sphere.

However the differences among the European countries are more important than the gender differences we can't neglect that in some of the indicators above, we found some paradigmatic gender differences. Reinforcing the importance of our methodological hypothesis, it became evident that those gender differences revolve around themes that activate gender stereotypes. The scenario setting men and women in different social worlds is completely out of question, because both men and women

<sup>10</sup> In large numbers all small differences easy turn out to be statistically significant, that is the case when of the European Social Survey

agree that men should take as much responsibility as women for the home and children and both disagree (less in the south and eastern European countries) with the idea that when jobs are scarce men should have priority: family and paid work are realms of reality for both. However, European women show a slightly more egalitarian position than men, indicating stronger disagreement with the priority of men in the labour market and strongly agreeing with the importance of male commitment in the household sphere<sup>11</sup>.

Besides, and in contrast with this hesitation, women seem to have a clear professional oriented individual projects when compared to men in the labour market. When asked if men should have priority to work when jobs are scarce women tend to reject this idea.

So, finally, we can say that women in some European countries more than others face the possibility of scarifying their professional career for the sake of the family, but not for the sake of male labour market integration.

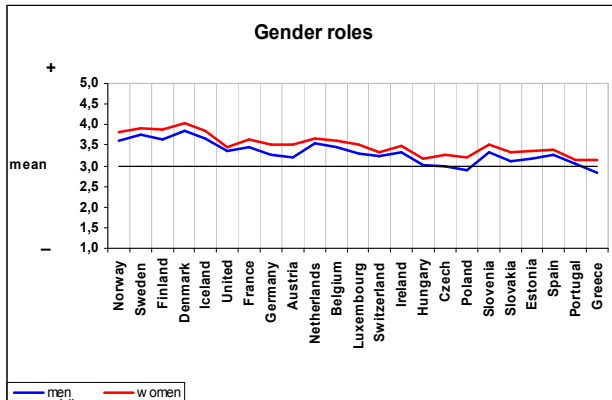
When analyzing in particular the answers to this question, we can't forget some methodological remarks that can help us to interpret the results. We can not neglect two semantic details on the statement "a woman should be prepared to cut down her paid work for the sake of her family": first, the statement is on the conditional form, tracing a hypothetic scenario; bearing this in mind the answers can show us a state of prevention, a conditional agreement with the scenario. Second, to be prepared doesn't mean to actually do it or deeply agree with the statement; it means to be aware of the possibility, it can be interpreted almost as kind of B plan for specific situation when the family well-being is at risk. Therefore, an answer near neither agree or disagree seems like a preventive position.

Using the previous indicators we produced a gender role index to portrait gender and country positioning in a scale that vary from gender roles strongly attached to traditional to more modern gender roles marked by an equalitarian view.

---

<sup>11</sup> At first look these differences seem to be neglectable, but they play a important role in the multiple regression analysis. In our explanatory model the independent variable sex have a strong explanatory capacity.

**Figure 5: Gender roles index by gender and status (fathers and mothers)**



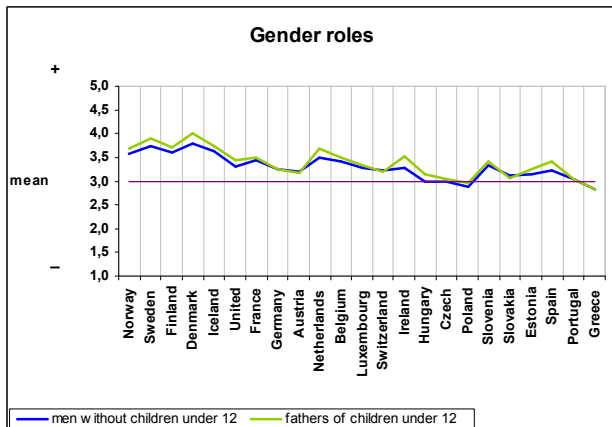
Analysing gender roles by:

- Gender and country
- Men and fathers and country
- Women and mothers and country

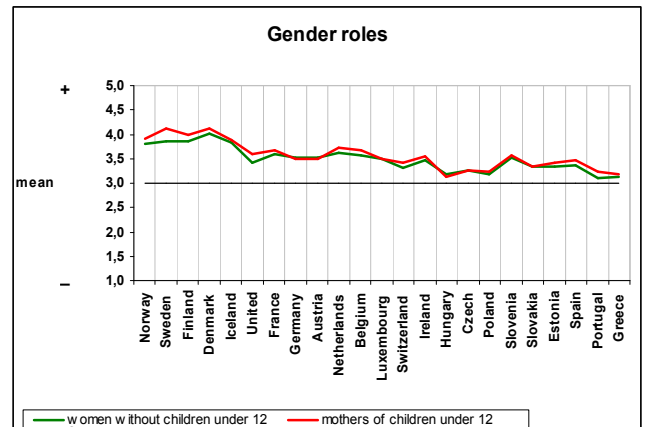
**Gender Roles Index:** a woman should be prepared to cut down on paid work for sake of family's well-being; men should take as much responsibility as women for home and children; Men should have more right to job than women when jobs are scarce; Children in home, parents should stay together even if don't get along

Scale: 1=Traditional; 5= Equalitarian

ESS 2004



ESS 2004



ESS 2004

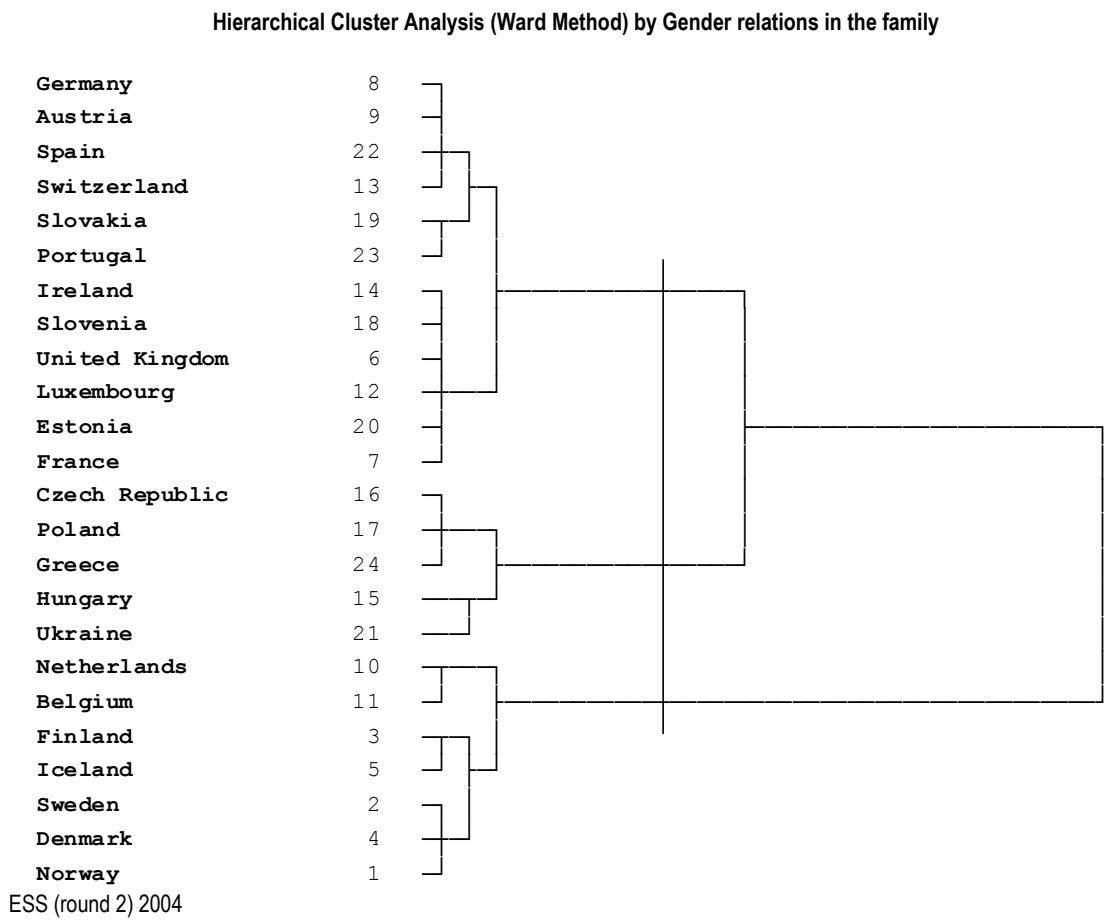
Following the ideological changes about masculinities and fatherhood, and the new emotional expectations about fathering, to be a father means also to become slightly more equalitarian about gender roles in the family. Gender roles in the family are perceived differently by men without children and men with children under 12. But the main pattern is maintained: country differences are more important than differences between men and fathers. The same can be said about women and mothers of children under 12.

It is important to state that egalitarianism tends to diminish as we go from the Nordic countries to southern European Countries, and this is valid both for men and women with or without children under 12 years of age (Fig:12). In this case, the overlapping trend for both men and women seems to translate cultural differences

deeply rooted in gender ideologies, and differences at this ideological level across Europe. These differences are materialized in an synchrony between a masculine and feminine normativity (Connell, 1987) in Europe where women are more modern and egalitarian men are also; where men are more traditional or less modern women seems assume a parallel positioning. Probably we can talk about differences across Europe about gender normativity, the ways gender roles and social relations are organized, lived, negotiated and perceived by the subjects.

Going a step forward in the European analysis we produced a cluster analysis using the gender roles indicators<sup>12</sup>. By this method we draw three clear distinct country clusters: equalitarian (Nordic countries, Belgium and Netherlands); intermediary (France, Luxemburg, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, UK, Ireland, Estonia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Portugal and Spain) and traditional (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Greece).

**Figure 6: cluster analysis using the gender roles indicators**



<sup>12</sup> A woman should be prepared to cut down on paid work for sake of family; Men should take as much responsibility as women for home and children; Men should have more right to job than women when jobs are scarce; Children in home, parents should stay together even if they don't get along; A person's family should be main priority in life.



The country cluster analysis has a descriptive function of the European reality. The country cluster works like a kind of snapshot over gender roles and ideologies across Europe, portraying differences and similarities among European countries about gender roles, and more deeply about gender ideology. The country clustering by gender roles opens up several research interrogations that can be synthesized in one question: does this clustering has something to do with cultural contexts?

Answering this question by a multiple regressions (Enter Method) analysis, the explanatory model takes into consideration indicators for structural and cultural constraints from the ESS 2004. Accessing the impact of cultural constraints in the definition of a more equalitarian stance among the countries selected, we have chosen the following predictors: years of full-time education completed and sex. Assuming gender as dimension for instantiation of deep cultural differences and values across Europe, we have activated the sex variable.

**Figure 7: Multiple Regression: dependent variable: Gender Roles Index**

	Sweden	Netherlands	UK	France	Austria	Spain	Portugal	Czech Rep.	Greece
<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>.094</b>	<b>.070</b>	<b>.068</b>	<b>.124</b>	<b>.103</b>	<b>.254</b>	<b>.147</b>	<b>.084</b>	<b>.208</b>
Years Education Completed	,236***	,241***	,145***	,288***	,181***	,458***	,262***	,209***	,333***
Income	-	-	,119***	-	-	-	,197***	-	-
Sex <sup>b</sup>	,123***	,119***	,074*	,066*	,193***	,135***	,101*	,187***	,284***
Working hours (week)	-	-	-	-	-	-,103*	-	-	-,061*
Household Type	Living alone	-	-	-	-,085*	-,103*	-	-	-
	Chidless Couple	-	-	-	-	-,170***	-	-	-
	Couple with children	-	-	-	-	-,122*	-	-	-
	Lone parent	,066*	-	,118***	,097*	-	,083*	,089**	-

\*  $p < 0,05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0,001$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0,0001$ .

<sup>a</sup> dummy variable: 0=men, 1=women

<sup>b</sup> dummy variable: reference: "Other"

First, cultural constraints seem to have a clear importance for the definition of more modern and equalitarian gender roles concerning the family life. The years of completed full-time education are the most powerful predictor of the model. In a cross country perspective is possible to say that gender roles vary positively, by that we mean

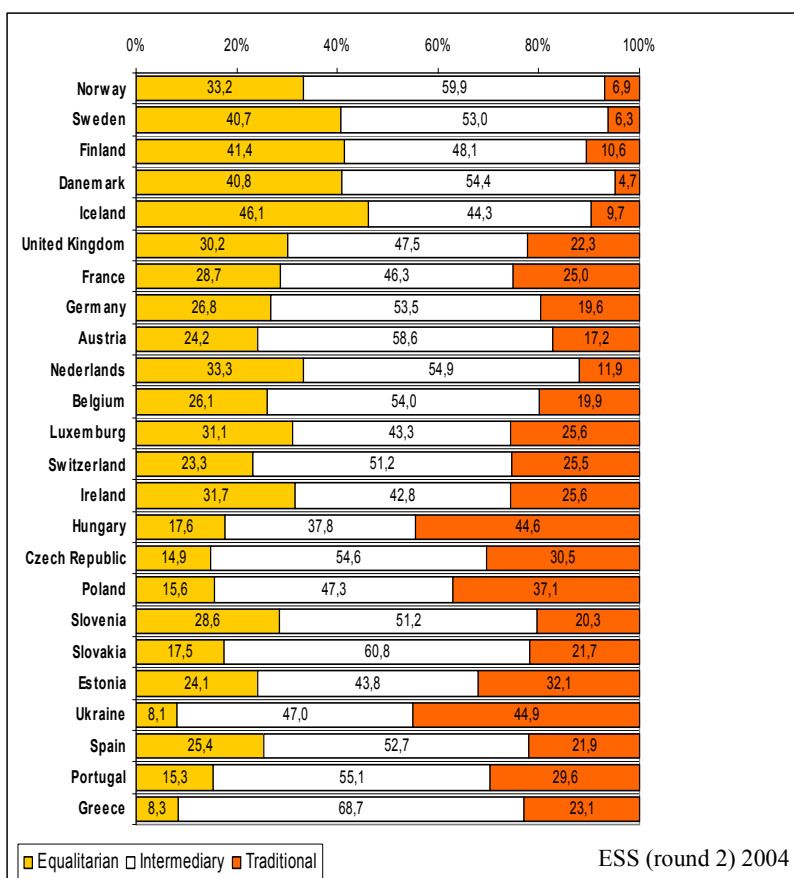
towards a more modern and equalitarian stance, according to the years of completed education (highest the level of education more equalitarian).

Among the selected countries we identify different levels of impact of the education variable: United Kingdom, Austria and Czech Republic face the lowest impact of the level of education on the definition of equalitarian position facing gender roles; Sweden, Netherlands and Portugal constitute a second group; the third group France and Greece; finally, Spain is the country where the definition of a equalitarian position facing gender roles vary more according to education (highest is the level of education more equalitarian).

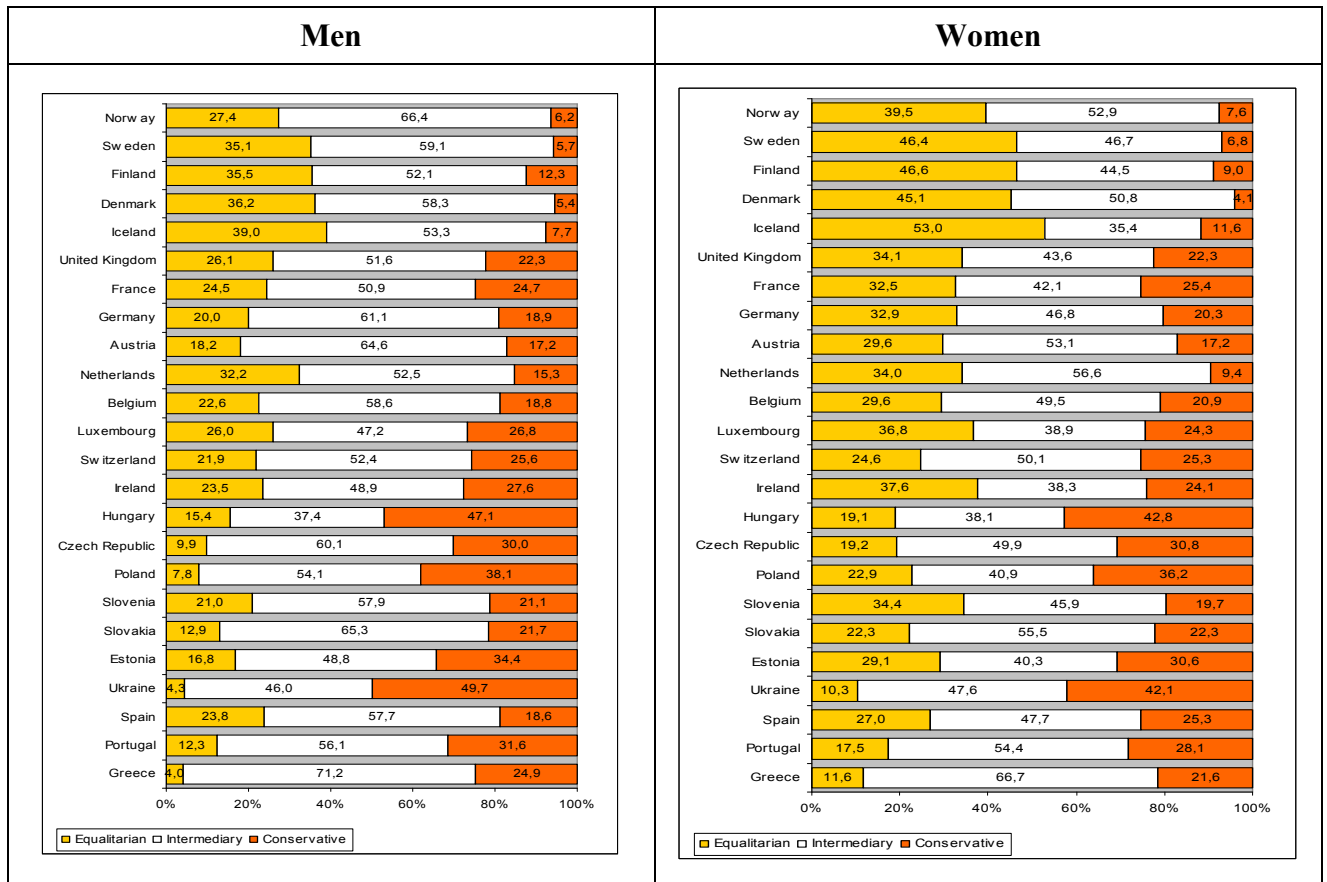
Analyzing the second predictor for the impact of cultural constraints, is possible to say that to be a woman means to be more equalitarian for all countries selected. This interplay has a particular importance in Greece, Czech Republic and in Austria.

The analysis of the European landscape has allowed us to find a tendency to more equalitarian gender values. However, it has become clear that the answers by country and by gender are positioned – in some questions more than others – close to the medium point of the scale: “nor agree nor disagree”. Trying to understand what lays behind such positioning, it has become inevitable to approach the individual as an analytical unity. Though we used Two Step Cluster, which permitted us to create a typology of individual positioning and apprehend the distribution of each one of these categories by country and gender. In accordance with the answers of each respondent, we managed to divide them in three groups: Equalitarian (N=11.004); Traditional (N=9.841) and Intermediary (N=22.445).

**Figure 8. New meanings by country (two step clusters)**



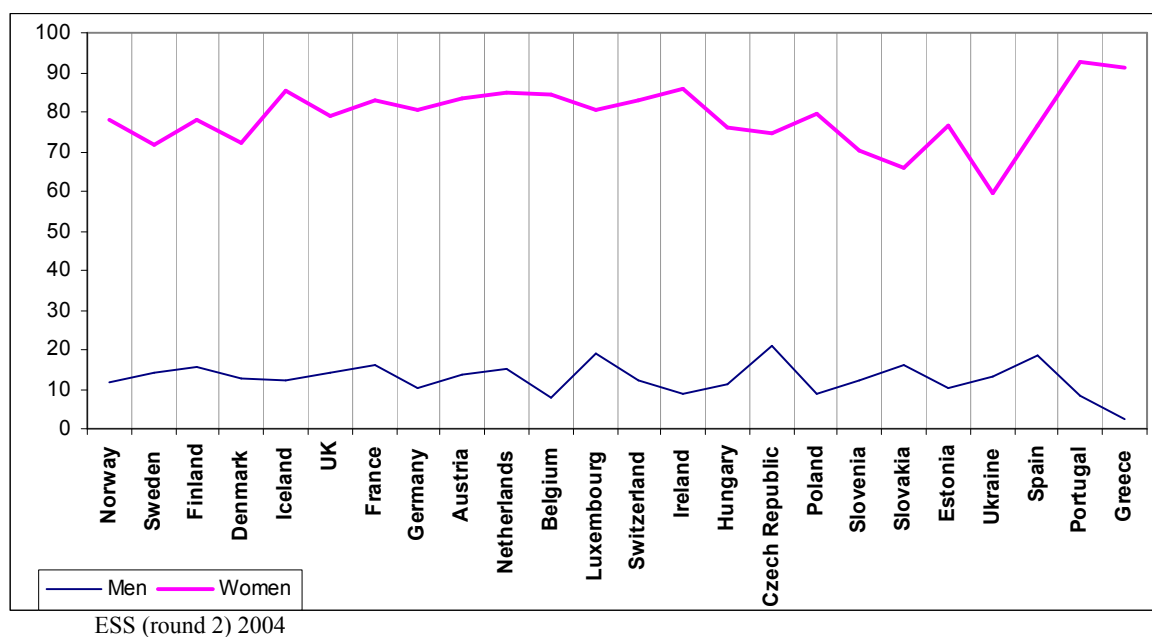
**Figure 9. New meanings of the family by country and gender (two step clusters)**



ESS (round2) 2004

Having in mind the emergence of new meanings of the family, as the creation of a new scenario for the production of new family gender relations, following Sullivan (2004) we might ask if men and women distinguish themselves in terms of domestic time: time allocated by women decreases and time allocated by men increases.

**Figure 10. People saying that they spend more than a half of the total time spent by the household in the domestic tasks (In a normal week day. Couples which both members work)**



Through a naïve functionalist vision we could say that men work more in the professional sphere and women work more at home, compensating each other. However, despite men in fact dedicate more hours to professional work the difference between men and women's working hours (of paid and unpaid work) is unfavorable to women (Torres and Brites, 2006; Torres, 2004).

Observing European Social Survey 2004 data, we verify that the percentage of women who is in charge of more than the double of total time spent by the household in domestic tasks is much higher than that of men who are in the same position.

This gap resolutely reveals the objective differences between what Europeans incorporate as one of the components of gender ideals of equalitarian trend – equal responsibilities towards children and home – and what they express through their daily practices.

Differently from what has become a routine along this text, this time we don't find differences between Nordic countries and the rest of Europe; in a sexual division of domestic work evaluation through time, we don't find any motive power in the way to equality, in contrast, these data reveal the preservation of structural inequalities in everyday life in the family scenario. Nevertheless, it is truth that the gap increases significantly in two southern Europe countries: Portugal and Greece.

**Figure 11: Satisfaction with several spheres of life, by life cycle and sex (%)**

	Childless up to 35 years old		Pre-school/ school children		Childless 36–50 years old		Childless > 50 years old		Total	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Hours spent on paid work	69	69	65	73	69	67	70	73	68	70
Hours spent on household tasks	61	65	66	61	68	64	68	71	65	64
Hours spent on training, studies, courses*	66	66	66	67	73	71	71	74	68	69
Division of household tasks*	87	79	86	69	89	68	89	74	87	71
Own free time	73	65	59	53	68	59	74	67	67	60
Financial situation	56	53	54	54	57	52	63	58	57	54

\*As this option was not applicable for a significant number of respondents we analysed only the valid cases.

**Source:** Time use and work-life options over the life course (2007)

Looking closer to satisfaction with various spheres of life, there aren't significant differences between men's and women's satisfaction about the hours spent on paid work; in the case of those men and women with pre-school or school children women are more satisfied than men.

Analysing the EB2003 data we can see that men are always more satisfied with the division of household tasks than women. This restates the idea emergent from the ESS 2004 data: women admit more than men disagreements about housework tasks – women are the most discontent about that dimension of their lives. The gender gap still stands when we analyze the satisfaction with free time: men still are more satisfied than women. Being a parent seems to have a negative impact on the satisfaction with own free time; both fathers and mothers register a decrease

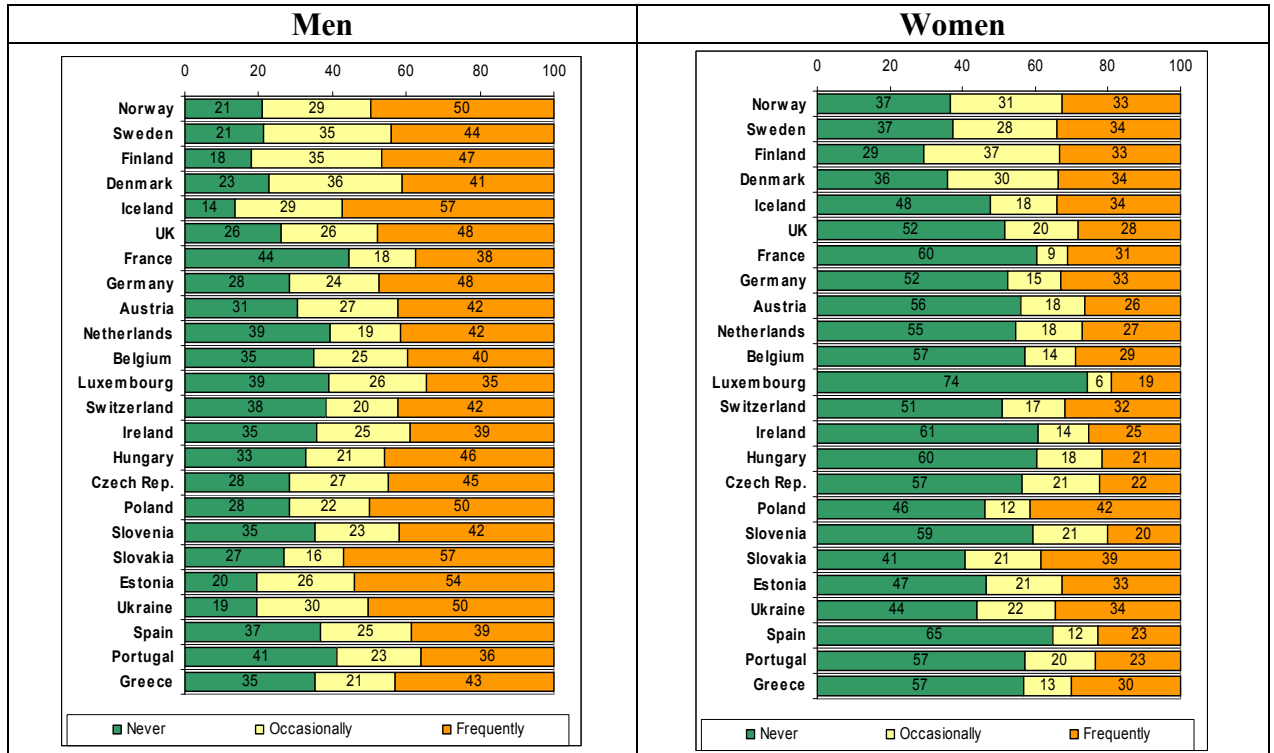
In a cross country perspective it is evident a cleft between the time spent by women and men in domestic tasks, therefore analyze disagreements, tensions and conflicts became inevitable.

ESS 2004 data reveal us relatively high percentages of Europeans assuming housework as a source of disagreements. Is interesting to notice the decalage between the percentages of men saying that housework is frequently a source of disagreement and the percentage women stating that this is never the motive for disagreement in the couple.

This decalage can be understood as one of the reasons why those disagreements aren't objectified into real open conflicts in the couple (Torres, 1998). The feeling of unfairness about the divisions of household tasks is somehow incorporated as gender difference, kind of product of a paradoxal maintenance of emphasized femininity incorporation (Connell, ) in a time of emergence of new egalitarian meanings of the family.

The rejection of the idea of conflicts between the couple can be the result of political and social constraints of the family dynamics. The feeling of equality or inequality don't emerge from the objective awareness of equality or inequality as abstract concepts, this is a mediated process. Those feelings are the result of an evaluation system that compares inter and intra gender differences, a political gender relations evaluation system activated in family context; therefore men and women will resist more or less intensively to conflict depending on the degree of identification with gender normativity and gender values.

**Figure 10. Disagreements about housework (working couples)**



ESS (round2) 2004

## | **Conclusions**

Common sense states that men and women are different types of persons, in terms of needs and tastes men give more importance to work and women give more importance to family. However research demonstrated that differences between the sexes are much narrower than differences within them. That is, a Norwegian woman is much more distinct from a Spanish woman than from a Norwegian man. These differences among countries are thus the result of contextual differences that are inscribed in individual practices.

This is clearly observed in the answers given to questions directly addressed to the importance given to several spheres of life. Men and women give much importance to work and to family, this latter being assumed as the main priority by both sexes. Therefore, men give much importance to family and women also give much importance to work, the professional activity being perceived as a source of income and identity (which has been revealed in qualitative research held in Portugal).

Different ways of asking questions produce different answers. Questions addressed with a gender neutral perspective will be answered according to personal projects and wishes. When gender roles are directly at stake the answers tend to be filtered by gender stereotypes. Men and women tend to answer in a more neutral way when questions refer to their personal projects, but tend to change when questions are filtered by gender roles stereotypes.

Work is a source of social identity both for men and women but this conclusion is only possible if we consider questions that are not pointing out directly at gender roles. For instance, mothers of young children say as much as fathers, women or men that their job is very important for them. But when we ask people in general if mothers should not work full time when they have children with less than three years of age, people hesitate – answer more nor agree, nor disagree – or reject more this idea.

Variables behave differently when they are framed in a more ambiguous manner and relate to the roles men and women are supposed to perform for instance if women



should be prepared to cut down on paid work for the sake of the family; or if men should have priority entering the labor market. As the purpose of this type of questions is to collect an opinion/degree of accordance, it tends to reaffirm the biological essentialist differences, compelling the respondents to position themselves in favor or against the statements.

Despite women always assume more equalitarian positions than men (what has also been confirmed in the ESS 2004 data analysis), answers tend to be more ambiguous and less reflective of an egalitarian perspective, being the diversity of the answers determined by the cultural and institutional constraints of the different countries.

The interplay between the everyday definition of orientations to work and care and the structural and objective conditions is fundamental, allowing us to avoid the temptation of looking to orientations as a-historical and a-social preferences. Education and sex are the variables that have more impact on gender roles and orientations to work and care. The more educated the more egalitarian is most of the countries. Women tend always in all countries to be more modern than men. Hours of work have a clear impact on pressure of work on family.

The ideals revealed by discourses are as deep rooted as habits towards action, but those ideals weren't produced in the same contexts of use (Lahire, 2005). Therefore, Europeans, both men and women, on one hand, can have a strong attachment to modern and egalitarian gender values; on other hand, this doesn't necessarily mean the acquisition of new habits, practically materialized and incorporated, becoming evident on everyday life of the family.

The beliefs and ideals can clearly be on the side of egalitarianism on gender relations and about the division of household tasks and responsibilities. At the same time, the practical habits tend to produce a dissonance between what is thought to be the ideal and the practice of everyday life. This dissonance is subjectively lived and managed creating feelings as frustration and culpability.

This dissonance is differently perceived and lived by men and women. Both men and women are unhappy with their incorporated dispositions to action, mostly with those dispositions revealed by practical habits that produce and reproduce gender differences and inequalities in the family context. Men are trapped in a transformation process about what does it mean to be a man. This position is particularly

uncomfortable because men wish to assume the colonization of masculinity by expressive and emotional dimensions of life, disrupting the traditional set of binaries that tend to put apart men and women: cutting the borders of rationality, control over themselves and others, and with the idea of family provider (instrumental role). However, at the same time they feel the need to maintain and reproduce a traditional masculine normativity, giving them some subjective security.

Women feel frustrated by the inadequacy between the modern and egalitarian ideals – that make the European women more modern than men – and the practical instruments and the habits of everyday life. In another way, women feel frustrated with the gap between what they wish for their lives and what they get from it. We can agree with Lahire (2005) and say that European women have incorporated depositions that they don't wish to put in practice, because this would represent the creation of strong subjective incoherence.

Besides the ideological discourses emerging throughout the Europe, men and women are both in a dissonant situation, for different reasons both wished a more egalitarian gender relations in the family but they still live in a practical gender differentiated everyday life and (somehow) feel powerless of practically change it. In Europe, domestic work still is mostly put into action by women, and is practically associated with the female universe. However, women don't wish to transform this felt inequality in a motive for tension within the family, transforming the inequality of time spent in household tasks in a clear motive for conflict. We found a slightly nuance between disagreement and conflict, creating a way to go between them: the former is evident, is perceived but is somehow justified and incorporated as something unavoidable, is the result of dissatisfaction. But there is a step to go to transform a disagreement or dissatisfaction into a conflict.

## References

- Amâncio, Lígia (2007) Género e divisão do trabalho doméstico – o caso português em perspectiva, in Wall, Karin e Lígia Amâncio (org.s) (2007), *Família e Género em Portugal e na Europa*, Lisboa, ICS.
- Amâncio, Lígia (1994), *Masculino e Feminino, A Construção Social da Diferença*, Porto, Edições Afrontamento.
- Butler, Judith (2004), *Undoing Gender*, New York: Routledge
- Connell, R. W. (1987), *Gender and Power*, Stanford: Stanford University Press
- Connell, R. W. (2005) *Gender*, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Crompton, Rosemary and Clare Lyonette (2005a) “The new gender essentialism – domestic and family ‘choices’ and their relation to attitudes”, *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 56 Issue 4.
- Crompton, Rosemary and Clare Lyonette (2005b) “Work-life «balance» in Europe”, *Working Paper n° 10*, City University, London.
- Crompton, Rosemary; Michaela Brockmann and Clare Lyonette, (2005c) “Attitudes, women’s employment and the domestic division of labour: a cross-national analysis in two waves” in *Work, Employment and Society* Vol 19 (2), BSA Publications, pp. 213 – 233.
- Ginn, Jay; Sara Arber; Julia Brannen; Angela Dale; Shirley Dex; Peter Elias; Peter Moss; Jan Pahl; Ceridwen Roberts and Jill Rubery (1996) “Feminist fallacies: A Reply to Hakim on Women’s Employment”, *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 47, n° 1, pp. 167 – 174.
- Haas, Barbara (2005) The work-care balance: is it possible to identify typologies for cross-national comparisons? *Current Sociology*, vol. 53 (3) pp. 487-508
- Hakim, C. (2000) *Work-lifestyle Choices in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Hakim, C. (2003) *Models of the Family in Modern Societies*, Ashgate: Aldershot.
- Hochschild, Arlie (2000) *The Time Bind. When work becomes home and home becomes work*, Henry Holt and Company, New York.
- Kimmel, Michael (2000), *The Gendered Society*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Lahire, Bernard (2005), “Patrimónios individuais de disposições: para uma sociologia à escala individual”, in *Sociologia, Problemas e Práticas*, n° 49, pp: 11 – 42.
- Lewis, Jane (2002) "Gender and welfare state change" *European Societies* 4(4) pp. 331 – 357
- Singly, François de (org.) (2007) *L'injustice ménagère*, Armand Colin
- Sullivan, Oriel (2004) Changing practices within the Household: A Theoretical Perspective, in *Gender & Society*, Vol. 18, No. 2, pp. 207-222
- Therborn, Goran (2004), “Between Sex and Power. Family in the world, 1900-2000”, London, Routledge.
- Torres, Anália F.V. da Silva, T. L. Monteiro, e M. Cabrita (1998) *Homens e Mulheres entre Família e Trabalho*, Lisboa, Comissão para Igualdade no Trabalho e no Emprego (CITE).

- Torres, Anália, (2004), *Vida conjugal e Trabalho. Uma perspectiva Sociológica*, Oeiras, Celta Editora.
- Torres, Anália and Rui Brites (2006) “European attitudes and values: the perspective of gender in a transverse analysis” *Portuguese Journal of Social Science*, Volume 5.3.
- Torres, Anália (2006) “Work and Family in Portugal” in Giovanna Rossi (edited by) *Reconciling family and work: new challenges for social policies in Europe*, Franco Angeli, Milano, pp. 9 – 36.
- Torres, Anália, Barbara Haas, Nadia Steiber and Rui Brites (2007) “Time Use, Work Life Options and Preferences Over the Life Course in Europe” *Monitoring Quality of Life in Europe*.
- Torres, Anália; Rita Mendes and Tiago Lapa (2007) “Families in Europe” *Portuguese Journal of Social Science*, Volume 6.2.
- Wall, Karin (2007), “Atitudes face à divisão familiar do trabalho em Portugal e na Europa”, in Wall, Karin e Lígia Amâncio (org.s) (2007), *Família e Género em Portugal e na Europa*, Lisboa, ICS.