

The doctoral dissertation attempts to analyse relation between the population climate and family policy as well as the possible influence of fertility-related policies on reproductive behaviour of population in the Czech Republic since 1990. Results are based on the PPA surveys, an international research project that was organised in two rounds within ten years interval. The dissertation is composed of introduction in Czech and eight published (or accepted for publication) papers both in English and Czech.

Most European countries in the 1990s were experiencing similar demographic trends and prospects regarding reproductive behaviour. The increasing awareness of the long-term implications of demographic trends for European societies has excited a growing interest in the potential action that might be taken by policy-makers to minimize the adverse effect of these trends. In the beginning of the 1990s the initiative of researchers from the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute and the Institute for Population Research in Italy resulted in a long-term international research project Population-related Policy Acceptance Surveys, which became known as PPA surveys. One of the aims was to assess the possible impact of fertility-related policy measures on reproductive behaviour.

In analysing determinants of fertility trends, it is often difficult to distinguish possible effects of population policies from impacts of the many factors that are known to shape private reproductive decisions. Research on the causes of fertility change indicates that reproductive behaviour is influenced by a complex set of mutually inter-acting economic, social and cultural circumstances. According to various international and national surveys in Europe, a majority for young people declare that they prefer a two-child family. However, the observed TFR in most European countries is substantially lower than 2 children per women. This difference between the number of children women have and the number they would like to have needs to be taken into consideration. It is argued that appropriate institutional adjustment could lessen the number of missing births.

In the first half of the 1990s a decrease in the level of fertility together with postponement of childbearing in the Czech Republic appeared to be in line with the shifts in reproductive behaviour known as the second demographic transition. However, since 1996 the Czech Republic belongs to countries with lowest-low fertility. Postponement of childbearing has been rather seen as a result of

unfavourable external conditions to start family and have the expected number of children. The fact that in the 1990s the Czech government gave up its responsibility to support families and that families had to bear an ever-growing part of the costs related to child-rearing was negatively perceived. Survey results showed that implementation of measures that would compensate parents for the expenditures related to upbringing of children and make easier for parents to reconcile work and family would have a positive impact on future fertility development.

In contrast to the observed TFR the PPA data indicated that two children remained the desired number for majority of young people in the Czech Republic. The gap between the desired number of children and their actual number is considered as reflecting a latent demand for fertility-related measures. Accordingly, population policies could be relevant as they were preferably aimed to help people to perform their fertility intentions. The analytical framework developed for the PPA survey was used to determine the components of the theoretical model of fertility intentions. A relatively simple model has been adopted assuming that fertility intentions are dependent on the following three main determinants: (1) personal characteristics related to life-cycle, (2) general life values and their perceive relationship with parenthood, (3) social context and population climate including the acceptance of population policy measures. Consequently the binary logistic regression, a multivariate technique, was used to explore the influence of determinants of this model.

Results suggested that most of the desired measures would have a significant effect if their aim would be to facilitate people to have as many children as they wish. The chances that woman would change her fertility intentions significantly increase only in case of introduction of a special allowance for parents taking care of children instead of working outside the home or measures that would facilitate a greater compatibility of work and parental duties. The highest potential impact of possible new measures was registered for respondents aged 25-29 years and for those who have one child.

In the Czech Republic the political upheaval of 1989 brought about fundamental changes in how the role of population policy should be understood. The liberal-conservative government in the first half of the 1990s abandoned pronatalist population policy. The previous system of extensive state support to families was significantly

reduced during the 1990s and oriented primarily to low-income families. Measures relating to families only became an element of social policy. There was a tendency to limit the state support only to families considered most in need. Such policy indeed prevents most of the poor families to fall below subsistence level. Nevertheless, governments seem did not pay enough attention to create conditions for a reinforcement of own financial sources of families, for example by tax policy. This concerns mainly the middle-income families that suffer the most from the restrictions in family benefits.

The national election in 1998 brought about a change in the governmental view on population developments. The persistence of an extremely low fertility level came to be seen as alarming. The social-democratic government declared that a concept of family policy was needed. Since the beginning of the 2000s the government has adopted measure explicitly aimed at increasing fertility. Most of the measures taken by the recent Czech government seem to be in line with public opinion. The highest support was given to financial incentives: an increase in birth grant, child allowance and tax relief, and improvement of leave and work arrangements. Survey results confirmed that demands of respondents as regards the state support vary by age, family size and education level. This means that family-related policies should include differentiated approach which would provide individuals with different options to choose from.

Dissertation is based on the following articles:

1. Kolorosová, J. (1995): Czechoslovakia: One Culture in Two States. In Moors, H., Palomba, R. (eds.): *Population, Family, and Welfare, A Comparative Survey of European Attitudes*. Vol. 1, Clarendon Press Oxford, s. 102-121.
2. Kocourková, J., U di Corpo (1998): The background of European fertility patterns: a typology of similarities and dissimilarities in values and attitudes. In Moors, H., Palomba, R. (eds.): *Population, Family and Welfare, A Comparative Survey of European Attitudes*. Vol.2, Clarendon Press Oxford, s. 34-50.
3. Kocourková, J. (2004): Přidávky na děti: preference a realita. (Child allowance: preferences and reality) *Demografie*, roč. 46, č. 1, s. 22-32.

4. Kocourková, J., Sambt, J., Stropnik, N. (2006): Preferences versus actual family policy measures. The case of parental leave and child allowance. In Hoehn, Ch., Avramov, D., Kotowska, I. (eds.): *People, Population Change and Policies. Lessons from the Population Policy Acceptance Study*. Kluwer/Springer (v tisku).
5. Kocourková, J., Kamaras, F., Moors, H. (1998): The impact of social policies on reproductive behaviour. In Moors, H., Palomba, R. (eds.): *Population, Family and Welfare, A Comparative Survey of European Attitudes*. Vol. 2, Clarendon Press Oxford, s. 242-261.
6. Kocourková, J. (2001b): The potential impact of fertility-related policies on future fertility developments in the Czech Republic: analysis based on surveys conducted in the 1990s. *AUC-Geographica*. UK Praha, roč. 36, č. 1, s. 27-51.
7. Kocourková, J. (2006a): Od politiky populační k politice rodinné: vývoj v ČR od počátku 90. let. (From population policy to family policy: development in the Czech Republic since the beginning of the 1990s) In Rabušic, L., Kocourková, J., (eds.): *Reprodukční chování populace ČR a rodinná politika*. (Reproductive behaviour of population in the Czech Republic and family policy). KDGD, PFF UK, Praha (in print).
8. Kocourková, J. (2006b): Proč a jaká rodinná politika v ČR: postoje české veřejnosti k pronatalitním opatřením. (Why and what family policy in the Czech Republic) In Rabušic, L., Kocourková, J. (eds.): *Reprodukční chování populace ČR a rodinná politika*. (Reproductive behaviour of population in the Czech Republic and family policy). KDGD, PFF UK, Praha (in print).