

Stream #9

The Role of the European Union in Caregiving and Parenting: What Direction are Family Policies Taking?

Conveners:

- Adriana Offredi, Autonomous University of Barcelona
- Natalia Tosoni, University of Bologna
- Mara Yerkes, Utrecht University
- Ester Gubert, University of Trento

Over the past twenty-five years, European policymaking has exerted an increasingly visible influence on Member States' family policies. The European Union (EU) has gradually taken on a more central role in this area, in particular aiming to promote gender equality within households and families. This includes a fairer distribution of care responsibilities - not just for children but also for dependent older people - as well as supporting women's equal participation in the labour market. In this context, significant policy changes have been promoted, most notably through the adoption of the 2019 Work-Life Balance Directive. Several other EU initiatives have contributed to shaping national family policy agendas alongside this binding instrument, albeit through softer forms of legal tools. These include the European Pillar of Social Rights, within which the Work-Life Balance Directive is embedded,

the revision of the Barcelona Childcare Targets, and the recent European Care Strategy. Together, these initiatives delineate a European framework that increasingly guides family and care policies while leaving room for substantial variation in national implementation.

This session focuses on the role of the EU in shaping family policies of all kinds (i.e., for children and dependent adults). We invite submissions that address, but are not limited to, the following questions:

- How have EU measures impacted Member States' family policy systems? How have European measures been implemented in national or local family policies and with what consequences?

- How has European family policy changed across time? To what extent are we witnessing convergence or divergence across Member States' family policy systems in light of EU efforts?
- What role does the EU play in shaping family policy? Is the EU a source of constraint or an agent of improvement in family policy systems? How has this role changed across time?

We strongly encourage the submission of comparative papers on these and other relevant topics, although single-country studies are also welcome. We seek a diverse collection of papers, including historical, conceptual, methodological, and empirical studies, and we welcome both qualitative and quantitative submissions. We also invite and actively encourage interdisciplinary papers.