

## CHAPTER 8

### UNDERSTANDING LOWER AND LATER FERTILITY IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE\*

*This chapter discusses explanations of rapid fertility decline in the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. It connects the pre-1990 reproductive regime of relatively early and universal childbearing with the social and economic organisation of the state-bureaucratic societies, which were characterised by the lack of alternative opportunities, limited or blocked educational and career pathways, notorious shortage of the labour force, specific incentives supporting early marriage and parenthood, lack of reliable contraception, and the strong position of the family. The dramatic fertility and family changes after 1990 are frequently interpreted as a reaction of these societies to economic and social crisis. This study argues that such an explanation is valid to some extent, but underscores the increasing heterogeneity in economic prosperity and social changes across Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the influence of broad social and cultural shifts not related to the 'crisis' explanation. In other words, substantial changes in family formation and living arrangements can be seen as a consequence of a fundamental social transformation which brought about new opportunities, increased education, changes in the character and organisation of labour, consumerist values, and efficient contraception. These developments are largely in line with the earlier societal changes in Western European societies.*

#### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

“The notion that the recent fertility decline reflects more than a reaction to the economic crisis, increased opportunity costs for women, or large cohorts following small ones gains further support from the observation that other changes in the family followed in the wake of this fertility decline and they too have the appearance of a fundamental transition.”

(Ron Lesthaeghe (1983: 416) on Western Europe)

Over the 1970s and 1980s trends in fertility, reproduction, and living arrangements in Central and Eastern Europe increasingly contrasted with the dynamic developments taking place in other parts of Europe. This contrast was one of the relative stability, high uniformity, and relatively ordered life courses in the 'East' and of the rapid changes and increasing 'disorder' in the life courses among the populations in the 'West.' Postponement of marriage and childbearing, the rise in non-marital cohabitation, and a significant increase in childlessness

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\* This is a modified version of the following article: Sobotka, T. 2003. "Understanding lower and later fertility in Central and Eastern Europe". In.: Kotowska, I. and Józwiak, J. (eds.) *Population of Central and Eastern Europe. Challenges and Opportunities*. Statistical Publishing Establishment, Warsaw, pp. 691-724.

and extra-marital fertility seemed to be phenomena which ceased to spread east of the border delineating the communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Radical transformation of fertility and family patterns there began after the collapse of the state-bureaucratic systems in 1989-1991, which considerably changed the demographic map of Europe within just one decade (see Chapter 7). Major changes, such as a rapid decline in fertility and marriage rates, progressed with breathtaking speed, providing room for a plethora of explanations. These can be divided into two major streams: one proposes that fertility changes were driven mostly by the social and economic crisis of the 1990s (e.g. UN 2000b), and the other perceives fertility changes as stimulated predominantly by complex political, social, and cultural shifts, bringing the institutional structure of post-communist societies closer to that of Western European countries. Although many scholars have recognised that the constraining 'crisis factors' and broad cultural changes operated in tandem (e.g. Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 2002), a great deal of discussion focused on the dichotomy between the 'economic crisis' vs. the 'cultural and ideational shifts' explanations (Philipov 2003).

This distinction has important theoretical implications: if crisis-related factors have prominently influenced fertility trends, we could expect recuperation of fertility and, at least to a certain extent, restoration of previous childbearing patterns once economic recovery takes place. However, if ideational changes or cultural and social transformation in general have been driving the fertility and family shifts, their influence is likely to be long-lasting and irreversible. There are, naturally, possible combinations of these two explanations. The intensity and duration of the economic and social crisis have varied extremely across the region (UN 1999b; Ellman 2000; UNICEF 2001) and thus we may suspect that in societies which experienced sharp increases in poverty and income inequality, collapse of the social security system, and severe economic crisis, fertility declined primarily due to these factors. Furthermore, the influence of different factors may change over time, with cultural change gaining in importance once the economic situation starts improving (Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 2002). This possibility provides a link to Philipov's (2003) view of fertility shifts in Central and Eastern Europe as results of sudden discontinuity in people's lives after the collapse of the previous social system. Such a discontinuity may consequently stimulate rapid ideational change.

This contribution discusses specific features of the societal framework within which decision-making concerning childbearing, reproduction, and family life among people in Central and Eastern Europe took place before 1990 and contrasts it with the current situation, wherein radically different forces shape the life courses of individuals. To a certain extent, this is a sketchy, speculative, and generalising endeavour. The former communist countries of Europe have many contrasting features in terms of their cultural diversity, history, religious traditions, social structure, and economic development, including the major cultural fault line between Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity, which delineates the traditional East-West division of Europe. Nevertheless, the shared experience of strongly bureaucratized regimes

with the power monopoly of the Communist Party, an almost entirely nationalised economy, and centralised planning means that the overall institutional framework was becoming fairly similar across the countries of Central and Eastern Europe over the four decades following World War II. Likewise, there are many common features in their shared experience of the collapse of the previous political system and the struggles to implement democracy and a market economy.

This chapter is organised around the following three questions:

- 1) Why, until the end of the 1980s, was Central and Eastern Europe largely unaffected by the transformation of fertility and family patterns occurring in the 'West'?
- 2) Why did the changes taking place during the 1990s proceed so fast?
- 3) How shall we interpret the increasing differentiation of fertility and family patterns in this region?

Before 1990, the institutional fabric of the society was supportive of an early and almost universal pattern of childbearing and marriage. Subsequently, the dramatic restructuring taking place during the 1990s has rapidly transformed Eastern European societies in the way which is conducive to later childbearing and an increased diversity of individual fertility and family strategies. This study outlines major factors contributing to this pattern reversal, among which ideational changes form just one part of a complex puzzle. While this chapter concentrates mostly on social and cultural factors, which are likely to be durable and have long-lasting influence, this should not be seen as neglecting the importance of economic crisis following the break-up of the previous system, initially affecting almost all countries in the region.

Addressing changes in the post-communist societies of Europe, this chapter focuses on the countries and regions analysed in Chapter 7, including the territory of the former GDR. Consequently, the countries are grouped into the same geographical division to differentiate between different parts of the former Soviet Bloc: Central Europe, South-eastern Europe, the Baltic countries, and the four remaining European countries of the former Soviet Union (post-Soviet countries). The following parts of this chapter are divided into three main sections. Section 8.2 outlines the main factors influencing childbearing decisions during the era of state socialism; Section 8.3 discusses the major causes of dramatic changes in fertility after 1990 and reviews the evidence on the impact of uncertainty on the timing of parenthood in Central and Eastern Europe. Finally, Section 8.4 addresses factors contributing to the increasing diversity of fertility patterns in Central and Eastern Europe.

## **8.2 THE FAMILY-ORIENTED ERA OF EARLY AND ALMOST UNIVERSAL CHILDBEARING**

### **8.2.1 Fertility and family patterns in the 1970s and 1980s**

In addition to their repressive and totalitarian character, the communist regimes initially “stimulated cultural changes important for modernisation and, in certain aspects, favourable for the population” (Machonin 1997). Many developments taking place in Eastern Europe after World War II—such as extensive industrialisation and the concomitant (partly forced) labour participation of women, strong anti-religious ideology, expanding health and educational systems, and rapid urbanisation—contributed to a fall in fertility rates, an increase in divorce rates, the establishment of a two-child family norm, as well as a decline of the age at first marriage and childbearing in Central Europe. The liberalisation of abortion laws between 1955 (Soviet Union) and 1960 (Yugoslavia) enabled women to avoid unwanted births. As a result, the spread of several features typical of the second demographic transition took place in Eastern Europe already during the 1950s, well ahead of other European countries. Around 1960, during the era of the ‘golden age of the family’ in the West, the total fertility rate declined below 2.0 in Estonia, Hungary, and Latvia, the proportion of extra-marital births in East Germany, Estonia, Latvia and Russia exceeded 10%, while abortions outnumbered births in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and most of the Soviet Union, and the total divorce rate was as high as 20% in Romania and several republics of the former Soviet Union. If one were to have predicted a region where the traditional family would disintegrate most during the decades to come, Eastern Europe would have been an obvious candidate.

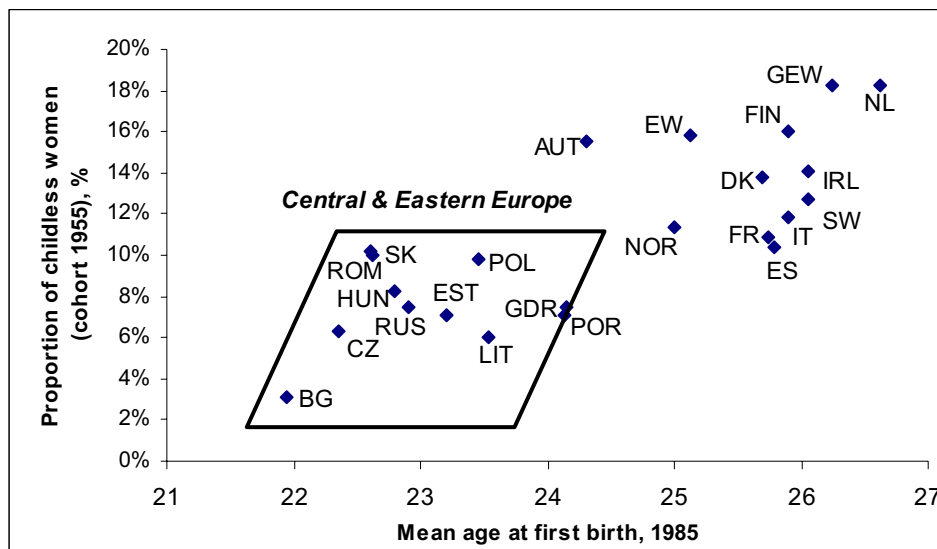
However, it was Central and Eastern Europe where a strong familism prevailed until the end of the 1980s, where values like a ‘happy family life’ and ‘having children’ retained overwhelming popularity, and where people who did not enter a family and did not have children were often viewed with incomprehension. Despite the initial radical modernisation, communism in fact preserved many traditional features of patriarchal society, such as the perception that child-rearing and most household obligations are almost exclusively women’s tasks. The gradually introduced social and family policies, together with the rigid organisation of society, considerably limited alternative choices and opportunities, making the decision for an early marriage and parenthood a logical option for the overwhelming majority of people. Thus, within the European context, Central and Eastern Europe increasingly stood out as a region with relatively high fertility rates, early transition to marriage and childbearing, very low childlessness rates coupled with a very low proportion of never-married people, and strong orientation toward a two-child family model. Most people followed the same standardised pathway of life transitions marked by completing education, entering a first job, marriage, and a subsequent move to one’s own apartment, closely followed by childbearing.

However, increasing divorce rates gradually made living arrangements among middle-aged people more diversified.

By the mid-1980s, demographic contrasts between the ‘East’ and the ‘West’ of Europe were fairly pronounced. The mean age at first marriage in Central and Eastern Europe was between 21 and 23 years, with the first birth usually following very soon afterwards (Sardon 1991; Council of Europe 2003; see also Chapter 7). Among women born in 1955 only 3% to 10% remained never married and childless (see also Chapter 5, Table 5.3). Figure 8.1 displays the East-West contrast in the case of the proportion of women born in 1955 who remained childless after age 40, and the mean age of women at birth of first child in 1985. Portugal is the only country of the ‘West’ where women were having children at a relatively young age and fewer than 10% remained childless. Interestingly, the position of Portugal is almost equal to that of East Germany, which had the latest childbearing pattern among the communist countries.

In Central and Eastern Europe, childbearing was concentrated in a very narrow age span. Figure 8.2a shows average values of ‘reduced’ age-specific fertility rates (incidence

**Figure 8.1.** Proportion of women born in 1955 remaining childless and the mean age of mother at birth of first child in 23 European countries



NOTES:

AUT – Austria, BG – Bulgaria, CZ – Czech Republic, DK – Denmark, ES – Spain, EST – Estonia, EW – England and Wales, FIN – Finland, FR – France, GDR – East Germany, GEW – West Germany, HUN – Hungary, IRL – Ireland, IT – Italy, LIT – Lithuania, NL – The Netherlands, NOR – Norway, POL – Poland, POR – Portugal, ROM – Romania, RUS – Russian Federation, SK – Slovak Republic, SW – Sweden.

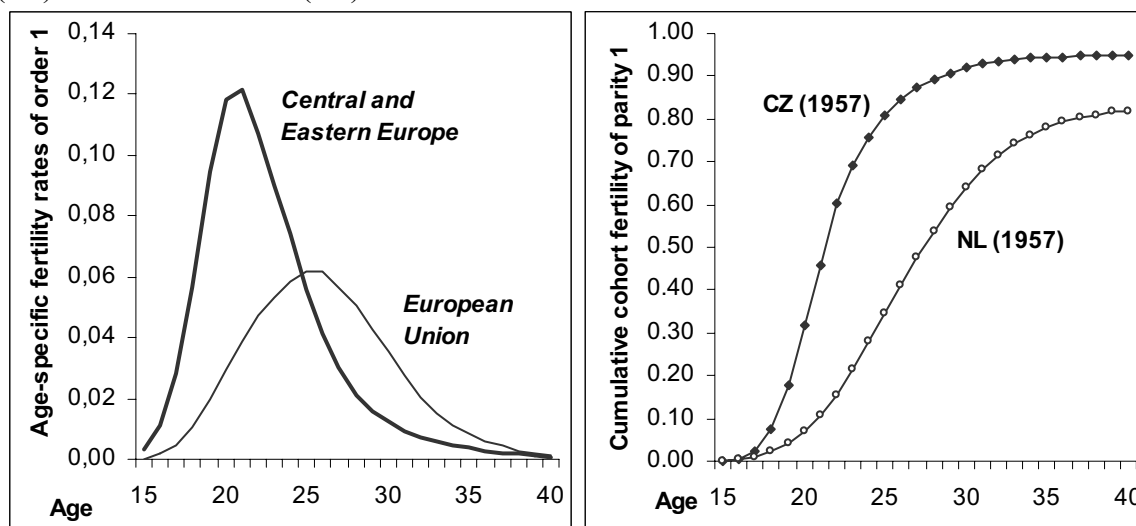
SOURCES:

Mean age at first birth: author’s computations based on EUROSTAT (2002), Council of Europe (2003 and 1998 (for East Germany)), Kreyenfeld (2002) for West Germany, Smallwood (2002b) for England and Wales, and Toulemon and Mazuy (2001) for France (see also Chapter 3, Section 3.2).

Proportion of women childless: see data sources for Chapter 5 (Section 5.4.1 and Appendix 2). The figure for Denmark is taken from DS (2000), the figure for Russia from Avdeev and Monnier (1995), the data for Bulgaria, East Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, and Portugal from Frejka et al. (2001) and Frejka and Sardon (2004)

**Figure 8.2a.** Reduced age-specific fertility rates of birth order 1 in Central and Eastern Europe (average values of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania and Slovakia) and the European Union (average values of Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden) in 1985

**Figure 8.2b.** Cumulative cohort fertility of parity 1 among women born in 1957 in the Czech Republic (CZ) and the Netherlands (NL)



SOURCES:

Figure 2a: EUROSTAT (2002), POPIN CR (2001), FSU (1986c) and unpublished data.

Figure 2b: EUROSTAT (2002) and author's calculations based on CSU (2000), FSU (1976-1989 and 1982b).

rates) of birth order 1 in four countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, and Slovakia) as compared with three countries of the European Union (Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden) in 1985. In the 'East,' the modal age of women at first birth was between 20 (Bulgaria, Slovak Republic) and 22 (Lithuania) years and up to 60% of first births took place among women aged 19-23. In the 'West,' the modal age at first birth was typically between 25 and 26 and childbearing was considerably more dispersed across age groups, with many women having a first birth after the age of 30. Most women in the 'East' finished their reproduction at a relatively young age. A comparison of the cumulative fertility of parity 1 among women born in 1957 in the Czech Republic and the Netherlands (Figure 8.2b) clearly illustrates this pattern: four out of five Czech women gave birth to their first child by age 25 and 90% by age 29. At the same time, only a third of Dutch women gave birth to their first child by age 25, two out of three by age 30, and 80% by age 37.

### 8.2.2 Main factors shaping decision-making on childbearing and family life before 1990

To understand the differences outlined, this study discusses several factors that mutually contributed to childbearing and family patterns in the communist countries of Europe. It pays attention to the reduced influence of education and career on childbearing decisions, the effects of pro-natalist policies, the high predictability of the life course, the lack of opportunities, the function of the family, and the slow spread of modern contraception coupled with relatively easy access to abortion.

*Education and career did not have much influence on family life*

While gradually lengthening duration of education and increasing participation in paid labour presented women in Western Europe with the growing dilemma of how to combine their professional life with childbearing and childcare, in Eastern Europe education and career did not constitute such strong obstacle to women's childbearing plans. The vast majority of people finished education before reaching adulthood. The motivation for prolonged education or studying later in life was limited, since the effect of education on one's professional career was pretty small. Frequently, other principles—such as membership in the Communist Party—were more decisive for one's position on the labour market. The system in which manual workers were often paid better than university professors generated “a depreciation of the intrinsic value of broad education as a requirement for leadership” (Macek et al. 1998). Employment career did not have much influence on reproductive decisions. The extensive, ineffectively managed economy, created a need for an additional workforce which, together with the necessity of two incomes in order to secure a decent living standard within the family, led to the almost universal labour participation of women. Due to small differences in income, work environment which was typically undemanding, and non-existent unemployment coupled with a permanent shortage of the workforce<sup>1</sup>, most women could easily return to their jobs shortly after giving birth to a child. A fairly common childbearing strategy among women was to give births to two closely-spaced children in their early twenties and start or resume working within two or three years afterwards.

*Social and family policies often had pro-natalist motive*

Facing declining birth rates, and trying to encourage both childbearing and labour participation among women, governments responded by implementing a number of diverse measures (David 1999). From the second half of the 1960s a comprehensive pro-natalist policy evolved, particularly in the Central European countries. The childcare provided by a dense network of crèches, kindergartens and elementary schools was relatively cheap, with subsidised meals and textbooks. In most countries, women were granted a paid period of maternity leave and families obtained child benefits, which were often progressively increasing with the number of children. Retirement age was often linked to the number of children a woman had; for instance, in the Czech Republic childless women were eligible for retirement at age 57, while women with three or more children were eligible at age 54

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<sup>1</sup> Carlson (1992) argued that Easterlin's (1968) “scarcity” theory—linking the difficulties of large cohorts on the labour market with their successive lower than expected wages and their resulting relative deprivation and lower fertility—worked in the opposite direction in Eastern Europe. In this region, large cohorts helped to reduce the shortage of labour and therefore stimulated better performance of economy, which in turn contributed to their increased well-being and higher fertility.

(Wynnyczuk and Uzel 1999). Housing, which was always in a short supply, was prominently distributed to married couples with children.

Restrictive measures intended to encourage childbearing were frequently enacted as well. Access to abortions was often limited in various ways, including limitations based on the family status of women, a minimal age limit, a minimal number of children, or the establishment of special commissions deciding upon each abortion request (e.g., in Bulgaria and the former Czechoslovakia). The tax system frequently penalised childless and unmarried people, with some countries imposing a special tax on unmarried persons over age 25 (e.g., Romania and most of the republics of the Soviet Union).<sup>2</sup>

Despite many differences, a great share of the family-related policies was motivated by the official pro-natalist agenda, often connected with chronic shortages in the labour force. Zakharov (2000: 295) points out that in the former Soviet Union

“the totalitarian State regarded quantitative growth of human resources, particularly in the labour force, as a specific means to escape economic problems as well as a source of continued expansion of military and geopolitical power.”

In Bulgaria, state population policy “focused on pro-natalist goals, echoing the motto ‘More children, more working power for the Fatherland’” (Vassilev 1999: 78). The fiercest pro-natalism was enacted in Romania, where the severe limitation of abortion in 1967 was later combined with a ban on importing contraceptives and even with forced pregnancy checks among women (Harsanyi 1993).

*Lack of opportunities and overarching social care made people's lives predictable*

Gradually, a strongly egalitarian system of social security, accompanying people from the cradle to the grave, was developed. This overarching state paternalism created an important connection between the state and the citizens. The extensive care made the lives of people more secure and predictable, less subject to uncertainty, and less in need of careful life planning; in turn, however, people were increasingly dependent on the state and more easily controllable. With regard to child rearing and economic security, Adler (1997) noted that under state socialism women exchanged “traditional private dependence on men for a new public dependence on state.” While the opportunities for career, consumption, travelling, personal development, and leisure activities, as well as the ability of people to decide freely about many facets of their lives were limited, the price of establishing a family and having children was relatively low. Conformity, obedience, passivity, and hypocrisy were rewarded and often formed a part of successful life strategies. Distinctiveness and personal initiative

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<sup>2</sup> A comprehensive account on abortions and abortion policies during the communist era is provided in Frejka (1983), Blayo (1991), Stloukal (1996), and David (1999). For a discussion on various family and fertility policies, see also Monnier (1990) and Klinger (1991).

were considered troublesome, and alternative lifestyles were hardly possible. Bauman (1992: 163) put forward a view of the functioning of communist societies as a ‘trade-off’ between freedom and security:

“Under the rule of the patronage state, freedom of individual choice in all its dimensions was to be permanently and severely curtailed, yet in exchange the less prepossessing aspects of freedom—like individual responsibility for personal survival, success and failure were to be spared.”

*Family as a refuge from the outside world*

Despite widespread secularisation and tolerant attitudes toward abortion, divorce, and non-marital sex, ‘happy family life’ was one of the most strongly emphasised life goals among people in Central and Eastern Europe. Family life in the ‘East’ served different functions and fulfilled different needs than in Western societies. In the system of bureaucratic housing distribution, starting a family was the easiest way for young people to obtain an apartment and leave the parental home; paradoxically, marriage and childbearing formed the early road to independence (van de Kaa 1994).<sup>3</sup> State subsidies in the form of loans for newlyweds, youth saving schemes, and family allowances further strengthened the attractiveness of marriage, suggesting that the only possible obstacle to family life—lack of money—was easily solved (Rabušić 1990). Thus, the ‘economy’ of marrying and establishing a family in the ‘East’ was radically different from the ‘West,’ where one had to accumulate enough resources in order to move into one’s own apartment and to be able to support a family and children.

Moreover, the family provided a space for authenticity, individual fulfilment, and self-realisation. This was in contrast to Western societies, where the responsibilities and restrictions of family life were often seen as inhibiting the quest for individual fulfilment (Ní Bhrolcháin 1993). Many people in the East lived a dual life, with a sharp divide between public and private behaviour and morality (Macek et al. 1998). It was only within a small circle of family and friends that people felt free to talk and express themselves openly. Widespread familistic behaviour in Eastern Europe can be seen as a specific reaction to the outside environment, an escape into the “private heaven away from the state control” (Adler 1997).<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, family ties and mutual aid of family members were important for providing informal services, thus substituting for the underdeveloped service economy.

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<sup>3</sup> The situation in Russia was described by Avdeev and Monnier (1995: 7) as follows: “housing shortage paradoxically resulted in earlier marriage and parenthood: it was necessary to waste no time in starting a family, to stand a chance of having one’s own home by the age of 30.”

<sup>4</sup> In his insightful book about the Russians, Smith (1976: 137) discusses a schizophrenic dichotomy between public and private behaviour, ascribing it to the political pressure for conformity, the hypocrisy of public life and the hassle of the marketplace, where people spent hours in the queues to buy basic necessities: “So they adopt two very different codes of behaviour for their two lives—in one, they are taciturn, hypocritical, careful, cagey, passive; in the other, they are voluble, honest, direct, open, passionate.”

Very high economic activity among women, ideologically supported by equating emancipation with employment, coexisted with a traditional family model, where the woman's role was seen mainly as that of a wife and a mother (Kotowska 2003). Marriage and childbearing were considered to be part of a normative life pattern (Adler 1997). Official communist morality pursued the idea of parental 'duty' and the responsibility of women to the society to bear children. Voluntary childlessness was not generally approved. Official support for families, leading even to the 'idolisation of family,' in some instances developed into a 'morality' similar to the most orthodox Catholic morality (Ferge 1997). Thus, instead of being 'liberated,' women faced the multiple burdens of combining full-time jobs with household and child-rearing obligations, and doing the shopping in between. Panova, Gavrilova, and Merdzanska (1993) term women's position in this system as a 'double slavery.'

*Lack of reliable contraception and widespread reliance on abortion*

Lack of information regarding sex and contraception, lack of sex education and even the general absence of words 'sex' and 'sexual' in the media created an environment in which ignorance regarding sex and reproduction was widespread (Stloukal 1996). Eradicating sexuality from education and official publications is sometimes seen as another example of institutional control over personal life (Vassilev 1999; Stishova 1996). Despite the official puritanism, young people experienced sex relatively early, usually before marriage (see Chapter 7, footnote 17). Due to both insufficient information and inadequate supply<sup>5</sup>, contraceptive use was low, in particular among adolescents and young people (see contributions in David (1999)). As a result, early pregnancies and 'shotgun marriages' were common in all communist countries of Europe; up to 60% of first marriages were concluded by pregnant brides. Abortion became widely available before modern contraception was developed and, paradoxically, often served as a symbol of personal freedom in a society which regulated all aspects of individuals' lives (Popov and David 1999). Abortions were, however, only rarely used by adolescent women or in the case of first pregnancies in general. They mostly served as a means of fertility limitation among married women, who had already reached their desired number of children.<sup>6</sup> Widespread use of abortions coupled with 'contraceptive fatalism' strongly contributed to the prevailing fertility patterns, namely to the early childbearing and relatively high birth rates, since the fertility inhibiting effect of abortion was lower than that of contraception (Frejka 1983).

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<sup>5</sup> In several countries, in particular East Germany, Hungary, and Slovenia, the supply of modern contraception, including the pill, was fairly good. In contrast, in the Soviet Union, condoms were inconvenient and the use of the pill, which was virtually unavailable, was further discouraged by health authorities (Popov and David 1999).

<sup>6</sup> In the Czech Republic there were 26 induced abortions per 100 live births among childless women as compared with 370 induced abortions per 100 live births among women with two children in 1989 (FSU 1990). A similar pattern prevailed in all European communist countries.

### 8.3 A SHIFT TO THE PATTERN OF LOW AND LATER FERTILITY

#### 8.3.1 A brief overview of major changes during the 1990s

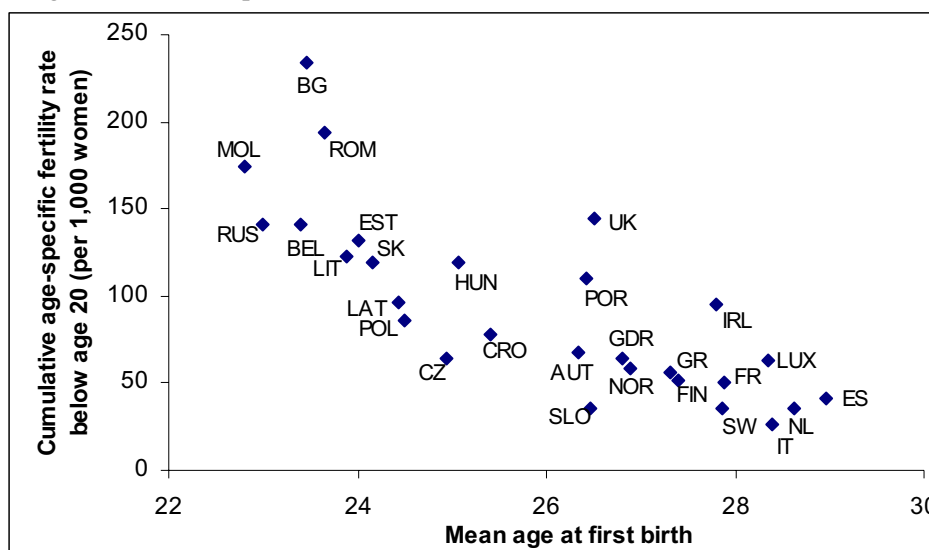
The dramatic changes in fertility patterns in Central and Eastern Europe during the 1990s have been described and analysed in Chapter 7 and in a number of publications dealing with either the region as a whole (e.g. Sardon 1998; UN 1999; UN 2000b; Sobotka 2002, Kotowska 2003; Frejka and Sardon 2003; Macura and MacDonald 2003; Philipov 2003; Philipov and Dorbritz 2003) or individual countries (e.g. Avdeev and Monnier 1995; Conrad, Lechner and Werner 1996; Adler 1997; contributions in Kučera et al. 2000; Zakharov 2000; Kreyenfeld 2001, Kohler and Kohler 2002; Konietzka and Kreyenfeld 2002; Sobotka, Zeman, and Kantorová 2003; Kantorová 2004 and 2004a). This chapter briefly summarises major trends and devotes more space to the debate on some underlying factors behind them.

The decline of the total fertility rates (TFR) is the most widely discussed feature of fertility changes after 1990. With the exception of Croatia, East Germany, and Slovenia, where a notable fertility decline had already started during the 1980s, all (post)-communist countries had a TFR above 1.8 in 1990, forming a relatively high-fertility region in Europe. During the following decade, the TFR dropped to the level of 1.1-1.4, moving the position of the post-communist countries to the lowest-fertility region in Europe. This shift went hand in hand with the following changes:

- An increase in the mean age of mother at birth of first child, which gained momentum during the second half of the 1990s. Fertility postponement was partly responsible for the fall in total fertility rates (see also Chapters 3 and 6).
- Changes in the parity distribution of births, which were characterised in South-eastern Europe and the post-Soviet countries by an increasing share of births of first order on the total number of births. This development indicates a growing number of families with only one child in many post-communist countries.
- A steep rise in the proportion of extra-marital births, in particular in Bulgaria, East Germany, Estonia, Latvia, and Slovenia, where 40% (Slovenia) to 56% (Estonia) of births occurred outside marriage in 2002.
- Increasing diversity of fertility patterns across countries.
- Rapid transformation in the patterns of union formation, and living arrangements as well as birth control. Marriage rates declined to very low levels and marriages have been delayed to a later age. Cohabitation has increased in popularity and partly substituted for the decline in marriage rates. Living arrangements and life transitions have become more diverse. Abortion rates declined, while modern contraception has become increasingly available.

Uneven changes in fertility timing contributed to increasing differentiation within the group of the Central and Eastern European countries (see Chapter 7). Postponement of first births was particularly intensive in the Czech Republic, East Germany, Hungary, and Slovenia, where the mean age at first birth increased by 2-3 years between 1990 and 2000. Figure 8.3 displays the mean age of women at first birth and cumulative age-specific fertility rates among women below age 20 in European countries in 2000. While it shows that the post-communist countries still form a group characterised by early childbearing and high teenage fertility, it also illustrates increasing diversity in fertility timing in Central and Eastern Europe. Early childbearing and high teenage fertility rates remain typical of countries in South-eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Central Europe has become fairly heterogeneous, with women in East Germany and Slovenia having their first child about the same age as women in Austria, Norway, Portugal, and the United Kingdom, and having lower teenage fertility rates than most countries of 'West.' On the other hand, childbearing among

**Figure 8.3.** Mean age of women at birth of first child and cumulative age-specific fertility rate among women below age 20 in 28 European countries in 2000



NOTES:

AUT – Austria, BEL – Belarus, BG – Bulgaria, CRO – Croatia, CZ – Czech Republic, ES – Spain, EST – Estonia, FIN – Finland, FR – France, GDR – East Germany, GR – Greece, HUN – Hungary, IRL – Ireland, IT – Italy, LAT – Latvia, LIT – Lithuania, LUX – Luxembourg, MOL – Moldova, NL – The Netherlands, NOR – Norway, POR – Portugal, POL – Poland, ROM – Romania, RUS – Russian Federation, SK – Slovak Republic, SLO – Slovenia, SW – Sweden, UK – United Kingdom.

Data for Moldova are for 2001; data for Italy are for 1997, mean age in Russia refers to 1998; data for East Germany, France and Croatia pertain to 1999.

Mean age for the United Kingdom refers to England and Wales only (estimates based on Smallwood 2002b).

SOURCES:

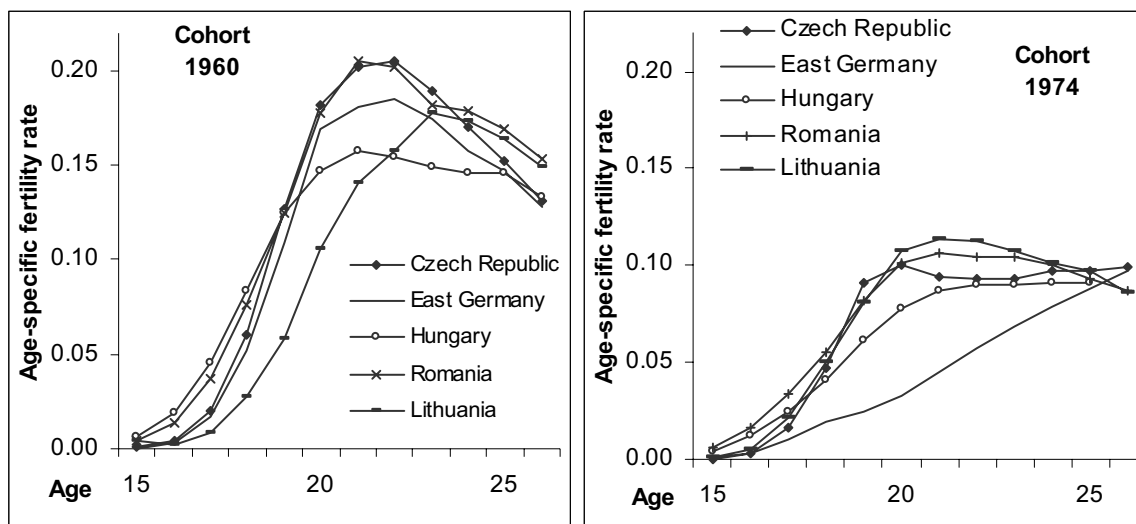
Mean age at first birth: Council of Europe (2003) and author's calculations based on EUROSTAT (2002). Data for Russia were taken from CDEC (2000). The figure for East Germany (26.8 years) is author's estimate based on changes in the overall mean age and age distribution of childbearing since 1990.

Fertility rate of women below age 20: Council of Europe (2001, 2003).

women below age 20 is more common in the United Kingdom than it is in most post-communist countries. A comparison with Figure 8.1 further reveals the extent of fertility postponement as well as the increasing diversity of the post-communist countries: while in 1985 women in Central and Eastern Europe had their first child on average at the age of 22 to 24 years, in 2000 these values were dispersed roughly between the ages of 22.5 (Moldova) and 27 (East Germany).

The ongoing profound transformation of childbearing patterns in Central and Eastern Europe is also clearly manifested in cohort fertility trends. Figure 8.4 compares fertility rates among women aged 15-26 born in 1960 and 1974 in five post-communist countries. The age schedule of childbearing of the 1960 cohort is characteristic of the previous pattern, with a pronounced peak at ages 20-23 (somewhat later in Lithuania and less pronounced in Hungary). The 1974 cohort, which reached adulthood under the new social and economic conditions, displays considerably lower fertility rates at ages 18-25, without any marked peak in the prime-childbearing years. In fact, in the Czech Republic and Hungary, fertility rates were 'flat' among women aged 21 to 26 years. The most radical decline of childbearing rates at young ages took place in East Germany, where the prime age at childbearing has moved into the late 20s. The relatively low fertility among women born in 1974 does not, however, indicate how low their completed cohort fertility may be. Most probably, many countries will record a notable recuperation of fertility rates among women after age 28.

**Figure 8.4.** Cohort age-specific fertility rates at age 15-26 among women born in 1960 and 1974 in the Czech Republic, East Germany, Hungary, Lithuania and Romania



SOURCES: author's calculations based on EUROSTAT (2002), CSU (2000), FSU (1976-1989), SB (1991-2000), CNPS (1996b), and unpublished data.

### **8.3.2 Factors contributing to lower fertility and the later childbearing pattern**

With the breakdown of the state-bureaucratic regimes, many social and institutional influences contributing to the distinctive East European pattern of childbearing gradually diminished. Pro-natalist incentives were replaced by social and family policies, whose importance often dwindled due to inflation and cutbacks in government spending. The system of centralised housing distribution was abandoned. With the exception of East Germany and Poland, access to abortion was retained or further liberalised and modern contraceptives have become widely available. Once-secure jobs became precarious as new private owners tried to boost the productivity of decrepit factories and other businesses. Education gained in importance, as it started to be a decisive factor for obtaining a good job and building one's career. A plethora of new opportunities opened up, competing with childbearing decisions.

The opening of domestic markets to 'Western' consumer goods, the spreading of new media, easier travel, and cultural globalisation have facilitated value changes among young people. All of this evidence shows that the whole societal structure was radically transformed, creating a very different set of constraints and incentives for childbearing. While the above-listed developments may ultimately lead to a sort of 'westernisation' of the post-communist societies, they form only part of the factors influencing people's decision-making. The scope of the economic crisis of the 1990s was enormous in some countries and relatively moderate in others. The new phenomena of hyperinflation, unemployment, and rising poverty, followed in many countries by a dramatic decline in living standards and the governments' inability to guarantee even very basic social security, confronted people with an unprecedented degree of uncertainty. For many, the previous relatively safe and predictable world has turned upside down into a jungle where one has to struggle to meet his or her basic needs. There has also an enormous differentiation in the degree of failures and relative successes of the whole economic transition (see a brief discussion in Chapter 7, Section 7.4.2).

While the likely effects of the 'crisis factors' on fertility have been extensively discussed from various standpoints, this chapter concentrates on the deep societal transformations which are likely to have long-lasting influence, ultimately prevailing over the short-term shocks and uncertainties. Most of the discussion focuses on the broad social, cultural, economic, and institutional changes which could be interpreted as supportive of lower fertility and a generally late, more variable fertility pattern. Particular attention is paid to prolonged education, the more flexible and insecure nature of work, the contraceptive and sexual revolution, and the new culture of consumption, choice, and opportunities. Since most of these developments first took root in 'Western' societies, their influence on fertility tempo has been broadly debated in Chapter 2. This section aims to outline those changes which contrast most with the model of societal organisation during state socialism, as discussed in Section 8.2.2, and stress their pertinence for reducing fertility and fuelling postponement of

parenthood. The subsequent section looks at the impact of uncertainty on fertility timing from the perspective of Central and Eastern Europe.

### *Expansion of higher education*

The rapid growth of participation in secondary and university education could be perceived as one of the most significant effects of the social changes in the 1990s. Before 1990, typically some 10% to 15% of young people were enrolled at university. Apprenticeship or practical training followed by early employment constituted a typical pathway toward a first job. In 2000, the proportion of young people studying at age 20-24 was between 19% (Romania) and 37% (Poland), i.e., roughly two times higher than at the end of the 1980s (EUROSTAT 2002; see Sobotka 2002 for more details).<sup>7</sup> Education has become the primary strategy to increase the chances of finding a stable job with a sufficient income (Kohler, Billari, and Ortega 2002). At present, considerably more women than men are studying at university in most of the countries analysed; in Slovenia, Bulgaria, and the Baltic countries participation in education at age 20-24 is by 30% to 50% higher among women. In addition, thousands of applicants in some countries (e.g., in the Czech Republic) are not admitted to university due to lack of funding, facilities, and qualified teachers.

As Chapter 2 (especially Section 2.2.1) has pointed out, the extension of education influences long-term fertility changes in several ways. In the first place, the status of 'being in education' is not compatible with childcare and family life. Young students usually lack the time and resources (housing and money) to have children. The start of parenthood is clearly linked to educational attainment (Schoenmaeckers and Lodewijckx 1999; Beets et al. 2001). As a result, the rapidly increasing proportion of women who study after age 20 partly account for the recent trend towards the postponement of first births. Although educational enrolment did not have such pronounced influence on fertility during the communist era as in other parts of Europe, its negative effect increased sharply after the establishment of the market economy in the early 1990s (see Kantorová 2004 for the Czech Republic; Sackman 1999 and Huinink and Kreyenfeld 2004 for East Germany). Equally important are the prevailing fertility differences by educational level. Women with university education put more emphasis on career and non-family interests and have on average fewer children than those who are less educated. Since the educational level in Central and Eastern Europe has been increasingly linked with work position, income, and career prospects, the 'opportunity costs' of childbearing among more educated women have become considerably higher as well (see also Section 8.3.3 below). In addition, prolongation of education and democratisation of access to higher education have an independent effect for spreading values favouring individual

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<sup>7</sup> Comparable data are not available for the post-Soviet countries. Data based on the CIS official statistics (UNICEF 2001) indicate that in the former USSR the proportion of young people studying at university around 1990 was higher than in Central Europe and the enrolment in tertiary education over the 1990s has increased only gradually, reaching 21% (Moldova) to 31% (Russia) by 1999.

freedom and gender equality (Lesthaeghe 2000). In the post-communist countries, university students are often the pioneers of 'libertarian culture' and new forms of behaviour, such as cohabitation and living-apart-together relationships.

*The new nature of work: uncertainty, flexibility and increasing income inequality*

Access to employment and the easy combination of career and childcare is one of the critical issues for future fertility development in the region. During the communist era, more than 85% of women of productive age participated in the labour force. Although most countries experienced a considerably steeper decline in labour force participation among women than among men during the 1990s (UN 2000b), women still accounted for 43%-49% of the total labour force in 1998. While some women may prefer to stay outside the labour market<sup>8</sup>, a large majority will pursue their labour participation to experience self-realisation, to make use of their education, and above all to support themselves financially. It is highly unlikely that once women have gained economic autonomy and hence also increased personal freedom by participating in paid labour, many of them would seek to become housewives. Lasting attachment to work was also found among East German women after German unification: despite high unemployment rates and an unstable labour market, they continued to have a considerably stronger work orientation than their West German counterparts, particularly in pursuing full-time employment (Konietzka and Kreyenfeld 2002).

High unemployment rates and poor employment prospects, pronounced among young and less educated people, impact decisions concerning long-term commitments (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.3 and the Section 8.3.3 below). In 2000, some Central European countries (East Germany, Poland, and Slovakia) as well as Bulgaria and Lithuania registered unemployment rate above 15%, exceeding 30% among people aged 15-24 (EUROSTAT 2002). In the post-Soviet countries, official unemployment remained low. In fact, unemployment is frequently hidden there and many people are officially employed or on 'temporary leave' without obtaining a proper salary.<sup>9</sup>

The reconciliation of work and motherhood is difficult in all 'transitional societies.' Since private firms emphasise flexibility, reliability, and work commitment, the possibility of future pregnancy complicates the labour prospects of young, childless women; as Lesthaeghe (1995) points out, gender competition on the labour market disfavours female applicants and reduces their promotion chances (Lesthaeghe 1995). The legal protection of women against labour discrimination is weak; opportunities for part-time work are scarce, poorly paid, and

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<sup>8</sup> Stankuniene (2000: 211) proposed that in Lithuania, "a new social group of housewives, that did not and could not exist in the Soviet period of full employment, is being formed."

<sup>9</sup> According to the ILO enterprise survey of Ukrainian industry (1999), quoted by Nesporova (2000: 143), over 20% of workers were on short-term work and 18% were on administrative leave. Women were forced to take extended maternity leave: "As a result, at any time, about one third of all employees were actually laid-off although formally employed."

insufficient. Many scholars perceive the increasingly competitive nature of labour in the market economies as interfering with childbearing plans and family life, with risk-averse individuals avoiding life-long commitments and remaining childless (McDonald 2002). As Beck (1992: 116) puts it,

“the labour market demands mobility without regard to personal circumstances. (...) The market subject is ultimately the single individual, ‘unhindered’ by a relationship, marriage or family.”

### *Delayed sexual and contraceptive revolutions*

Although Eastern European countries are highly differentiated with respect to contraceptive practice, sexual behaviour, and the sexual morality of their populations, delayed ‘contraceptive revolution’ as well as ‘sexual revolution’ have taken place in almost all of them during the 1990s. The decline in abortion rates occurred hand in hand with the fall in fertility rates and with the increase in the use of modern contraception. Contraceptive use among young people has been replacing the old ‘norm’ of unprotected sex followed by an early marriage and subsequent childbearing (see Chapter 7, Section 7.3.6). A rather open, liberal approach towards sexuality paved the way for the introduction of sex education and for a boom of news regarding contraception and sexual behaviour. Media that were careful not to discuss sex and reproduction during the communist era are now competing to spread messages about sexuality, pornography, and contraception. Women’s journals promoting ‘lifestyle sex’ (Hawkes 1999), special sections in magazines for teenagers, TV shows with well-known sexologists, easily accessible pornography, and books on *Kama Sutra* have all contributed to rapidly increasing knowledge and awareness concerning sex and contraception, particularly among young men and women.

The increased use of contraceptives has reduced the number of unwanted pregnancies and consequently also of unplanned and ‘mistimed’ births. The increase in the availability and use of the contraceptive pill constitutes the most significant change in contraceptive behaviour. With the exception of East Germany, Hungary, and Slovenia, pill use was very low before 1990. Besides the inability of the centrally planned economies to produce or import sufficient amount of cheap and reliable oral contraception that would have minimal side effects, some researchers see the low availability of the pill as an intentional effort by the authorities to maintain substantial state control over women’s reproductive behaviour, allowing them to undergo abortions instead (Popov and David 1999). The widespread use of the pill is often viewed not only as enabling the extension of women’s autonomy and control, freeing them from the fear of unwanted pregnancies, but it is also associated with the broad behavioural changes leading to the ‘second demographic transition,’ affecting norms governing sexual and reproductive behaviour (van de Kaa 1994). Perhaps the most important is its contribution to the postponement of childbearing by shifting the nature of decision-

making in this matter (see a more detailed discussion in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.5). Until the 1980s, contraception and abortion in Eastern Europe were mostly used to prevent additional births once the couples reached their desired number of children. Continuous pill use, which usually starts with the onset of sexual activity, shifts the decision about childbearing into a conscious decision to discontinue contraceptive use and to have children (van de Kaa 1997). Thus, it comes as no surprise that the most intensive fertility postponement has been recorded in those countries where the pill spread rapidly. For instance in the Czech Republic a very intensive postponement of first births after 1992 (see Chapter 3) occurred in parallel with the sharp increase in the proportion of women aged 15-49 using oral contraception, from 6.7% in 1992 to 38.2% in 2002 (UZIS 2003).

The sexual and contraceptive ‘revolutions’ are closely linked to the changing nature of intimate bonds, where sexuality, personal autonomy, and egalitarian relationships, both between partners and between partners and their children, play increasingly important role. Giddens (1992) refers to this phenomenon as ‘pure relationship,’ and emphasises its limited durability, subject to both partners deriving enough satisfactions from the mutual bond (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.4). This vision of increased personal freedom in entering and dissolving partnerships, serving individuals to pursue their own ‘life projects’, has been attacked by Bauman (2000: 90). He emphasises the negative ‘secondary effects’ of ‘pure relationships,’ namely, increased personal insecurity and a growing volume of “broken, loveless, and prospectless lives,” particularly among the socially disadvantaged. Whatever the different views on ‘pure relationship’ may be, they do not alter its obvious consequences for changing fertility patterns: delayed childbearing and low fertility rates appear to be closely connected with the new nature of intimate bonds.

#### *Choice and opportunities: the coming of the consumer society*

Bauman (1992: 169) considers the inability of the communist regimes to provide consumer choice to be one of the major reasons for their collapse. In Western societies, choice has become the criterion of the good life and personal success: “choice of the kind of person one would like to become, choice of pleasures one would like to enjoy, choice of the very needs one would like to seek, adopt and gratify.” In the ‘East,’ consumer values spread considerably before 1990; nevertheless, the channels to satisfy them were limited and did not compete with family life. In fact, consumerism was “interconnected with ‘familism,’ as many people evaluated their standard of living in terms of family welfare” (Stloukal 1996). After 1990 the once omnipresent posters celebrating the ‘achievements’ of socialism quickly gave way to billboards with images of young, attractive, happy people enjoying powerful cars, exotic holidays, and new mobile phones. For many young people, the new world of freedom and choice—to study, to switch jobs, to travel, to consume—is intoxicating. The old standards of behaviour are disappearing and are being replaced by individualistic lifestyles in which

“people make their own choices about marriage or cohabitation, where they are free to have children in or outside marriage, to have them alone or with a partner, and where they can have them early or late in life” (van de Kaa 1999: 31). Bearing and rearing children gradually becomes just one many possible lifestyles—an expression of one’s chosen identity (Kuijsten, 1996).

In all Eastern European countries, a large number of consumer goods became suddenly available since the introduction of market economy at the beginning of the 1990s. Easterlin and Crimmins (1985) establish a direct link between the introduction of new goods and decline in fertility: “The enjoyment of new goods tends to require life-styles other than those centering on children, since new goods are typically substitutes for, rather than complementary with, children.” The growth of consumerism is closely related with the increasing importance of leisure time, increased individualism and the avoidance of long-term commitments. Keyfitz (1986) proposed that childbearing as an activity is less able to compete not only with work, but also with leisure. Presser (2001) links the birth control technology, which enables women to postpone childbearing, with the growing sense of entitlement to leisure time among them (see also Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2). The pressure of increasingly uncertain and flexible work, discussed above, in combination with consumerism may contribute to the instability of partnerships and avoidance of lasting commitments. Bauman (2001: 156-157) makes this link explicit:

“Since present-day commitments stand in the way of the next day’s opportunities, the lighter and the more superficial they are, the less is the damage. (...) Bonds and partnerships are viewed, in other words, as things to be consumed, not produced.”

### **8.3.3 Impact of uncertainty on fertility decisions: Evidence from Central and Eastern Europe**

Does the rapid fertility change in Central and Eastern Europe help us understand the impact of uncertainty on individual decision-making? Many researchers have asserted that fertility postponement was a rational response to the collapse of the previous societal system and massive economic restructuring, linked to the rapid growth of existential insecurity. Kohler, Billari, and Ortega (2002: 656) use the term *strategic postponement* when referring to the situation prevailing in many countries in Central and Eastern Europe, where long-term commitments are deferred “in the expectation that the uncertainty about future prospects will be reduced over time.” This reasoning has a theoretical analogy in Easterlin’s (1976) hypothesis that a deteriorating economic and labour market position among younger generations, and consequently a ‘conflict between aspirations and resources,’ will lead to deferment of childbearing. In a broader view, Philipov (2003) linked fertility decline and intensive fertility postponement in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989 with sudden discontinuity, the demise of previous norms, and the resulting ‘normlessness,’ and high levels

of anomie. Although not refuting this idea, empirical data indicate that fertility postponement in Central and Eastern Europe had similar roots as in other European societies.

At an aggregate level, first birth postponement was most intensive in countries that were most successful in their economic transition and in which real income declined least during the 1990s (see Chapter 7, Section 7.4.2). At the same time, there was no deferment of motherhood until the mid-1990s in societies which were entrapped in severe economic and social crises, especially in the successor states of the former Soviet Union (except the Baltic countries). Interestingly, Aassve, Billari, and Spéder (2004) found that the GDP increase in Hungary had a negative, significant impact on fertility rates after controlling for individual circumstances, implying that economic growth may stimulate labour force participation and consequently lead to fertility delays.<sup>10</sup> At an individual level, fertility postponement was usually most intensive among highly educated women pursuing their career, a societal group which may be perceived as the ‘winner’ of the transition process in terms of opportunities and income growth gained. In contrast, women with low education continued bearing children at an early age and with a considerably higher intensity than more educated women (see Kantorová 2004 and 2004a for the Czech Republic; Kreyenfeld 2001 and Huinink and Kreyenfeld 2004 for East Germany). Huinink and Kreyenfeld (2004: 24) also found that in the cohort of East German women born in 1971 and reaching adulthood shortly before German unification in 1990, employment uncertainty surprisingly did not contribute to first birth postponement. Unemployment in fact accelerated childbearing as unemployed women had markedly higher risk of pregnancy and first birth; this finding further illuminates the fact that among women the effects of unemployment on childbearing are not universal and are influenced by a number of factors (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.3). Kohler and Kohler provided surprising findings on the effects of labour market uncertainty on childbearing propensity in Russia in the mid-1990s: women living in areas with a high proportion of unpaid wages and women whose husbands were unemployed had a higher probability of having a child. Furthermore, men’s concern about job loss and ability to obtain daily necessities was positively associated with childbearing.

Overall, the relatively limited number of the existing studies based on aggregate as well as individual level data challenge the hypothesis linking fertility decline and fertility postponement in Central and Eastern Europe exclusively with the effects of economic crisis and uncertainty. Rather, they signal a class-specific reaction to fundamentally changing societal conditions as well as the importance of the institutional settings of given societies. As Kantorová (2004a: 265) points out, in the Czech Republic more educated women

“made use of the new employment opportunities and career prospects, and their education received greater importance in terms of prestige or income than in the state socialist era.

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<sup>10</sup> The authors found, however, that the inflation rate was conducive to first birth postponement, thus better capturing the expected effects of uncertainty.

Women seemed to postpone family formation to a time after the consolidation of employment.”

Needless to say, for more educated women, the ‘opportunity costs’ of childbearing have increased considerably. Less educated women may have few career opportunities, and the difference between earned income and welfare benefits may be relatively unimportant to them. For these women, having a child may in fact constitute a decision which reduces their uncertainty, in line with the theory of Friedman, Hechter, and Kanazawa (1994; see Chapter 7, Section 7.4.2).

#### **8.4 DISCUSSION: DIVERSITY OF ECONOMIC CHANGE AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

This chapter has outlined major factors jointly sustaining the pattern of early and almost universal childbearing in Central and Eastern Europe until the 1980s and contrasted them with the new social phenomena emerging over the 1990s, which have shaped people’s lives in a radically different way and are supportive of late childbearing, low fertility levels, and generally more diverse fertility patterns. The evidence presented, necessarily partial and far from being complete, shows that the fertility changes of the 1990s, which are sometimes simplistically perceived as a crisis-driven fertility decline, form part of a complex transition in reproductive and family patterns, linked to the “entire restructuring of society” (Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 2002). The new demographic regime, often perceived as a manifestation of the ‘second demographic transition,’ has taken firm roots in Central and Eastern Europe (see e.g. Sobotka, Zeman, and Kantorová 2003 for a discussion on rapid demographic shifts in the Czech Republic). At present, almost all countries in the region seem to be beyond the ‘point of no return’ with respect to previous reproductive patterns. However, it is unlikely that all the countries will ultimately converge to a sort of common European fertility pattern. In spite of the fact that many fertility trends, such as the increase in the proportion of extra-marital births and the postponement of parenthood, have been recently progressing in almost all European countries, large variation in fertility patterns persists across Europe.

The aggregate-level data show that the differences in the intensity of the postponement of childbearing in Central and Eastern Europe are to a large extent linked with the success in economic transformation, with level of well-being, and with the degree of control people feel over their lives<sup>11</sup> (see also Chapter 7, Section 7.4.2). These findings indicate that the ‘ageing

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<sup>11</sup> Correlation coefficients of the change in the mean age of women at birth of first child between 1989 and 1999 in 15 countries of Central and Eastern Europe with the selected social, economic and cultural indicators are as follows: +0.87 with the GDP level (adjusted for purchasing power parity) in 1999, +0.88 with the spread of modern technology in 2000 (index based on the number of mobile phones per 1,000 people and Internet connections per 10,000 people), and +0.82 with the index of real wage change between 1989 and 1999. Furthermore, correlation was also high with the mean values of responses to two questions asked in the European Values Study survey in 1999 (see below): +0.87 with current life satisfaction and +0.79 with the

of fertility' may be a manifestation of increased choices and opportunities, whereas the profound social and economic crisis has led not only to a drastic fertility decline, but also to the preservation of the early childbearing pattern. Women who do not see any prospect in pursuing education and who have very low chances of finding a job may decide to have children early in life.

The preceding sections have largely unexplored many facets of culture and the effects of ideational change which have shaped the character of recent fertility changes and contributed to the increasing heterogeneity in fertility patterns in Central and Eastern Europe. Religious traditions, varying extent of secularisation, and the imprints of the communist ideology form the colourful cultural mixture of the region. The Catholic Church especially is known for its emphasis on 'traditional family values' and frequent interventions into the domain of human reproduction, trying to influence sex morality, family planning, and abortion laws. In Poland, the Church was the main active force promoting the ban on abortions established in 1993; it opposed the spread of modern contraceptives and obstructed to the introduction of sex education (David and Titkow 1994). Lesthaeghe and Surkyn (1988: 13) perceive the secularisation in its institutional dimension as the main factor of ideational changes, "a *conditio sine qua non* for pluralism and tolerance." In Europe, Protestantism has been more conducive to a progression towards libertarian culture than the Catholic or Orthodox traditions (Lesthaeghe and Moors 2000). These findings may partly explain the rapid spread of extra-marital births and cohabitation in the three secularised, traditionally mostly Protestant societies of East Germany, Estonia, and Latvia.

Despite the persistent influence of the older cultural and religious traditions, Eastern Europe was subjected to many decades of the official promotion of communist ideology, aimed at eradicating traditional religious belief and gaining complete control over society. Inglehart (1997: 38) proposed that this ideology "provided a functional equivalent to religion, furnishing an explanation of how the universe functioned and where history was going." Although Eastern European countries display a small degree of traditionalism and a generally high level of rationalism and secularisation, they rank much lower than other countries on the 'self-expression dimension' (Inglehart and Baker 2000). Values like trust, tolerance, subjective well-being, political activism, and self-expression, which are often associated with profound demographic changes in Western Europe (van de Kaa 2001), are much less present in the post-communist countries. The low emphasis put on 'postmodern' values may be caused by general feelings of an insecure, unpredictable life, as well as by the previous

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degree of freedom of choice and control people feel over their lives. Each correlation is significant at the 1% level.

The compilation of national data from the 1999 European Values Study was published in Halman (2001). *Current life satisfaction*: "All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?"; the value shows the mean country score on the 1 to 10 scale (1= dissatisfied, 10=very satisfied). *Freedom of choice and control*: "Please use the scale to indicate how much freedom of choice and control you feel over the way your life turns out?" Mean country score on the 1 to 10 scale (1=not at all, 10=a great deal).

influence of the repressive authoritarian regimes (Inglehart and Baker 2000). Especially in the post-Soviet countries, totalitarian socialism still enjoys considerable popularity. There, the social and economic transformation initially brought about an economic and social collapse which resembles “a caricature of the vicious capitalism the old Communist propagandists warned the masses about” (The Economist, 6.11.1999).

In the past, an inconsistent mix of traditional and modern values was strongly rooted among the people living in Eastern Europe. The recent evidence, provided by the 1999 round of the European Values Study surveys, reveals that, especially in the Baltic countries and Central Europe, the demographic changes of the 1990s occurred simultaneously with ideational change, which was also characteristic of earlier demographic shifts in Western Europe. Lesthaeghe and Surkyn (2002) found a substantial increase in the tolerance toward non-traditional living arrangements and procreation outside marriage between 1990 and 1999 in all regions of Central and Eastern Europe. Many of these value changes have their roots in the communist era; nevertheless, their rapid progression during the 1990s clearly marks the complex transformation of reproductive patterns in Central and Eastern Europe. With increasing stratification, manifested by broadening differences by educational level, growing income disparities, and diverging employment opportunities among different sub-populations, people in post-communist societies will employ a broader range of behavioural strategies in order to achieve their goals. Increasing acceptance of childlessness, extra-marital childbearing, cohabitation, and homosexuality has an important ‘enabling’ effect, facilitating the spread of previously less tolerated behaviour, and thus ultimately leading to an increasing variability in childbearing patterns and living arrangements.

The new forces, which have played an important role in shaping fertility changes after the collapse of the state-bureaucratic socialism—expansion of higher education, instability of work, the contraceptive and sexual revolutions, increasing choices and opportunities coupled with consumerism, declining importance of family, and the discontinuation of many previous policies which had pro-natalist effects—will continue to be modified by cultural differences. Moreover, the existing enormous social and economic differentiation between the post-communist countries is likely to continue, with some societies, in particular in the former Soviet Union, experiencing the inability of their governments to provide basic social security for their citizens. This may have some unexpected consequences, such as potentially increasing the value of marriage and family, which may substitute for the dysfunctional welfare system. Nonetheless, to a large extent, the postponement of childbearing, the increase in childlessness and extra-marital childbearing, as well as the ultimate decline of cohort fertility, will probably continue in all societies of Central and Eastern Europe.

