

Improving Policy Responses and Outcomes to Socio-Economic Challenges: changing family structures, policy and practice (Iprosec)

Author and Coordinator: Linda Hantrais, 2000–2003

Key search terms:

Disciplines: demography, gender studies, history, human geography, political economy, political science, social policy, sociology.

Topics / themes: cultural life (value systems); governance (ideology, welfare regimes); policy (delivery, implementation); socio-demographic processes (family structure, intergenerational relations, family–employment reconciliation); working life (household labour).

Units of comparison: administration (companies, local government, NGOs); demographic units (age groups, families, households, gender, generations, life course trajectories, socio-economic groups); economic systems (trades unions); employment (public / private sector organisations); political institutions (policy actors); social protection systems (policies with a family impact); spatial units (countries, EU member states).

Concepts: culture (lifelong learning); socio-demographic processes (biological ageing, distribution of household labour, family forms, fertility, parenting skills, population ageing); values (individualisation of rights, intergenerational solidarity); welfare (care, welfare dependency); work (informal economy, labour market concentration and segregation, reconciliation of paid and unpaid work).

Funding: European Commission Framework Programme 5.

Methodological approaches: case studies; comparative methods; documentary searches (literature reviews); qualitative approaches (focus groups, in-depth interviews, policy analysis, vignettes); mixed methods; quantitative approaches (secondary analysis); social surveys.

Methodological issues: bias (cultural, interviewer), causality, comparability, interpretation, reliability, transparency, universality vs particularity, validity.

Research context

Iprosec was a multinational team research project, undertaken between 2000 and 2003 with funding from the European Commission's Fifth Framework Programme (FP5), and coordinated from Loughborough University, UK. The research proposal was developed from an earlier desk study of seven EU member states carried out by the Loughborough team for DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (see *Cross-National Research Papers*, 1999). The FP funding enabled an expanded interdisciplinary team to conduct new empirical work across eight EU member states and three candidate countries.

Research topic / theme

As in the desk study, the Iprosec project examined the interactive relationships between socio-demographic trends, changing family structures and the policy responses of governments to the challenges they raised.

The European Commission's remit under the Union's treaties includes the monitoring of demographic trends, and the theme continues to be of broad topical interest. DG EMPL has long been concerned to raise awareness of the implications for national governments and for Europe's standing in the wider world of population decline and ageing, changing family structures and gender relations. The FP proposal was submitted at a time when the Commission was seeking to promote greater cooperation between DG R&D and the policy DGs, and the call for proposals identified a number of issues of mutual interest to these two Directorates General.

Aims, objectives and research questions

The primary aim of Iprosec was to inform policy in EU member states by developing a greater understanding of socio-economic change, with particular reference to changing family structures, intergenerational and gender relationships, the social and economic challenges they present, and the policy responses formulated by national governments and at European level. The project team planned to observe and analyse policy environments in eleven EU member and applicant states, to examine how policy learning occurs, and how policy development influences socio-economic change.

The review of research and policy documents, and media reports, carried out for DG EMPL had shown that the amount of policy, academic and public debate varied considerably between countries, but not necessarily in line with the relative importance and direction of socio-demographic trends. This was an observation that the project aimed to explore further. A methodological objective was to track and record the comparative international research process as it unfolded.

The project addressed three interlocking questions:

1. To what extent is policy informed at EU and national level by the knowledge base on the social situation in EU member and applicant states and, more especially, by knowledge about the factors contributing to changing family structures?
2. How does the policy process operate at European and national level and, more specifically, what are the policy options available to meet socio-demographic challenges, the factors motivating the decisions of policy actors, and the possible social and economic impacts of policy, with particular reference to family formation, gender and intergenerational relations?
3. How can the efficacy of policy responses to socio-economic challenges and their outcomes be improved at EU and national level?

Although these three questions were not explicitly comparative, the intention was to monitor and compare socio-demographic trends, policy contexts and policy responses in 11 EU member states with a view to locating the countries selected in relation to EU-wide data, identifying similarities and differences between the societies under study and, subsequently, the potential for policy learning and transfer.

Resources and governance

Since the European Commission's application procedures were not established initially to support socio-economic research, applying for FP funding proved challenging for social scientists, particularly in countries where researchers in these disciplines had little experience of working in multidisciplinary international teams.

The Iprosec team had an advantage at the outset in that the majority of its members had worked together before, and the team leaders had experience of EU bureaucracy and research funding application procedures. UK universities were already well supported by their Brussels Office, and Loughborough, like many institutions in the UK, had a dedicated and experienced finance team able to assist with the application. The process was nonetheless extremely time consuming for the Loughborough 'home' team.

The proposal was able to draw on the data collected and analysed in the desk study for seven of the participating countries. It was necessary to replicate the data collection for the four countries that were new to the research. The project team anticipated that this stage in the research might be problematic, because of known gaps in time series data and the lack of comparable data, or because the data that were available were not readily accessible, particularly in the then candidate countries. The project budget therefore included earmarked funding to allow for subcontracting and the preparation of dedicated datasets where necessary.

Iprosec was awarded 1 million euros for 36 months with a start date in 2000. The budget was intended to cover the appointment at Loughborough University of a full-time research fellow for the duration of the project, a full-time research assistant, part-time secretarial and administrative assistance, and travel expenses for the coordinating team. Most of the eight partners were full-time academic researchers, and their research assistants, several of whom were postgraduate research students, were contracted for an agreed number of days to carry out the project work in the participating countries. At their request, two research assistants who had already worked with the coordinating team on the desk study, and had been found to be reliable and efficient, were recruited under contract to Loughborough to conduct the research in their countries under the supervision of the coordinating team rather than being employed to work with senior academics in their own institutions.

The number and geographical spread of participating countries (see below for research design) met the Commission's criteria. The inclusion of a partner from Malta was disallowed since the Maltese government was undecided about its plans for membership of the EU. In the event, the Maltese partner attended the project meetings as an observer and member of the Advisory Committee, and conducted parallel research in his own country with national government funding.

The Loughborough team included a broad disciplinary mix: political scientists, political economists, sociologists, social policy, leisure management and gender specialists, an historian and a human geographer. In addition to political scientists and sociologists, the partners included economists and demographers. The project was complex and required a range of methodological and personal skills and competences, from large-scale survey and data analysis to qualitative in-depth interviewing and policy analysis.

The European Commission's standard contractual arrangements applied, with staged payments, regular meetings with the scientific officer in Brussels and team members in Loughborough, and annual reporting.

After the first year, the Commission assigned a new scientific officer to the project. The project team members were able to establish good working relationships with her, which meant that they had some leverage for making changes to the research design and methods with her approval.

Management and coordination

The project was managed and coordinated by the Loughborough team. The coordinating team met every month, and the minutes and action points were circulated to partners. Project meetings were held twice yearly. Management Team meetings, with rotating membership of partners, were scheduled to dovetail with all the project meetings. Advisory Committee meetings, attended by three external advisers and the scientific officer, were organised to coincide with one of the two bi-annual project meetings and the dissemination conference. Loughborough was selected as the venue for all the project meetings, because the University provided excellent dedicated residential conference facilities that could be obtained at discount rates at weekends, enabling team members to take advantage of lower rates for air travel.

Given the cultural and disciplinary mix, the coordinating team took on responsibility for all the work packages. The Research Fellow ensured that relevant schedules and documentation were distributed by email, and monitored the deliverables. The coordinating team processed the national reports in consultation with the relevant partners and research assistants, and materials from data collection and reporting were made available on DVDs to all team members at the end of each stage in the project. Individual members of the coordinating team visited the participating countries that were not being visited for other purposes (for example attendance at committee meetings of organisations not directly involved in the project). These visits provided an opportunity to discuss progress, validate information and gain insights into the research environment.

The bi-annual project meetings were carefully prepared using pre-circulation of papers and exchange of materials. Detailed schedules were discussed in full at the meetings, with particular attention to issues that might be contentious or could be misunderstood or misinterpreted. Training sessions were organised to introduce research assistants (and sometimes partners) to methods or analytical techniques with which they were unfamiliar, occasionally with assistance from external presenters.

No funds were sought for translation. Together the project coordinator and coordinating team were fluent in five of the project languages. All the partners and / or their research assistants were able to converse competently in English. Documents were issued in English, and meetings were conducted in English. National reports were submitted in English, French, German, Italian or Spanish, and were consolidated by the coordinating team. Time was set aside for consultation, reviewing and editing. Interviews were conducted in the language of the relevant country, and anonymised recordings and reports, following an agreed analytical framework, were supplied to the coordinating team for comparative analysis.

In the first two stages of the research, partners were asked to provide national reports for each body of information collected (statistical trends, policy contexts, elite and family interviews) for collation and comparative analysis by the coordinating team, using a framework structured around the topics covered in the questionnaires and interviews. Drafts were circulated electronically to the partners for comment and validation, thus ensuring that all the partners were kept informed about and involved in each stage of the project. Visits by members of the coordinating team to the participant countries and by the partners to Loughborough, in conjunction with the annual workshops, enabled team members to discuss in more detail specific features of the responses they were reporting, while also extending their knowledge and understanding of the policy process in the project countries.

Arrangements were made for research assistants with relevant linguistic expertise to sit in on interviews (cross-border interviewing), to participate in discussions about concepts and methods in other countries and to share data. They were encouraged to work together to produce papers on aspects of the project that were of particular interest to them. These and other methods papers were published throughout the duration of the project in the *Cross-National Research Papers* series (2001–2003, edited by the coordinating team and made available on-line at www.xnat.org.uk).

Stakeholders were involved both in the research (elite interviews) and in dissemination events (see below).

Professional and ethical standards

In general, the professional and ethical standards required by the European Commission, although less formalised in the early 2000s than in later years, were widely accepted in the participating countries. However, practice did not always match theory. The coordinating team had to deal with instances of nepotism in the recruitment of personnel in some of the partner countries; misappropriation of funds occurred

in situations where the award was being used to subsidise work not connected with the project; some partners were lax in observing deadlines for reporting; and, in one instance, the partners failed to carry out the work required and attempted instead to pass off information collected for other purposes.

The coordinating team was aware that certain questions, for example about ethnicity, could not be asked in some countries. Since one of the aims of the Iprosec project was to contribute to the development of international research methods, an important feature of the project was to encourage team members to observe and comment on the research process. Partners were asked to be explicit about any inconsistencies in data that might affect comparability and to record and provide explanations for any problems they had in collecting information. These discussions were undertaken in the knowledge that the methodological choices made at each stage of a research project would affect the findings.

The *modus operandi* of the research team, whereby partners carried out the work in their own country but reported to the coordinating team, was dictated by the scope of the project and the financial constraints. Any bias that may have been introduced due to the constitution of the international team, the selection of countries and of contextual factors, the collection and analysis of data was made explicit.

Although it was difficult to avoid researcher bias, safeguards, such as cross-border visits and the constant exchange of materials, were built into the design of the project to reduce the risk of cultural and intellectual, or 'insider' bias. Multiple and complementary data collection methods were used to counteract bias and ensure accuracy, consistency and comprehensiveness in data collection, reporting, analysis and interpretation. Triangulation (multimethods) was used to validate data. The countries selected in the project were observed from different distances, both temporally and spatially, using national-level quantitative data, policy context materials and interviews. Discordant findings were discussed individually with the relevant partners and during the project meetings.

The Commission actively encouraged dissemination of the research, and all publications from the project were required to acknowledge the Commission's sponsorship. Articles for the *Cross-National Research Papers* were published under the authors' names, and they held their own copyright.

Rationale for the research design

The rationale for the research design was pragmatic; the intention was to bring to bear an array of disciplinary and socio-cultural perspectives on a cluster of issues by closely mapping the different stages in the project onto the research questions. It was not feasible to include all EU member and applicant states in the project for practical reasons. Nor would it have been appropriate, given the aims of the research and the requirements of the European Commission, to limit the project to only two or three countries. A form of stratified sampling was adopted to select countries with groupings based on the timing of their membership of the EU. They were also chosen to include units of different population size and density, with varying socio-economic, cultural and policy environments and at different stages of economic and welfare development.

The Continental core was represented in the project by France, Germany and Italy; countries with universal welfare systems by Ireland and the United Kingdom; the Mediterranean states, with their less developed social protection systems by Greece and Spain; and the universalist and egalitarian approach to welfare in the Nordic states by Sweden. The candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe, represented by Estonia, Hungary and Poland, had shared the experience of transition from the Soviet era and had reached an advanced stage of preparation for EU membership at the time of the project. They had undergone considerable internal restructuring of their social, economic and political systems to enable them to meet the EU's accession criteria, but diverged in the welfare pathways they had followed.

All the countries in the project had a common reference point: their membership of the European Union. They all subscribed, at least in theory, to a common set of goals as a condition of membership. In addition, individual member states were contributing to the formation of policy within international institutions while also being obliged to ensure compliance at national level through their own legislation and institutions (obligated transfer).

The project design took account of within-country differences: federal states and East–West Germany, North–South divide in Italy, and rural–urban divide in Greece and Poland. Variables such as gender, generation, socio-economic status and ethnicity were incorporated using a multi-level and multi-dimensional project design.

The decision to select countries representing different waves of EU membership was taken with full awareness that the 'choice' would be critical in determining not only how the research process unfolded, but

also the outcomes. Any similarities or differences revealed by cross-national study might, for example, be no more than an artefact of the choice of countries. By excluding cases such as Portugal and the Netherlands, a number of interesting dimensions were not covered by the project, although they were developed in subsequent work (Hantrais, 2004).

Rationale for the research methods

Iprosec combined a number of methods, each associated with the different stages and levels in the research design: secondary analysis of large multinational datasets; contextual data collection and analysis, supported by documentary evidence; elite interviews with key informants; surveys and in-depth interviews with families, focus groups and vignettes.

In the first stage of the project, secondary analysis of EU and national statistical data on socio-demographic change was used to track trends in family formation and dissolution, gender and intergenerational relations, and to record macro-level changes in working patterns and social protection provision. Large-scale harmonised datasets (primarily published data from Eurostat) were supplemented, wherever possible or necessary, by national data on social and demographic change. In particular, partners in the candidate countries were asked to validate and supply data that were not available from national sources.

While national-level tables were being compiled, partners were also collecting information about national policy contexts, drawing on policy documents, opinion surveys, scientific studies and media debates. Building on the earlier desk study, participants in the project were asked to respond to an agreed set of questions, involving analysis of what the literature had to say about the policy challenges that governments were facing as a result of socio-economic trends; the ways in which the issues raised by socio-economic change were being addressed by policy actors in different national contexts; and the possible impact of social, family and economic policies on socio-demographic behaviour.

The intention in the first stage of the research was to provide an indication of how different governments were responding to the trends identified by the quantitative data, to determine whether any patterning, or clustering, in terms of similarities and differences, could be found in the ways socio-demographic change, social and economic challenges, and policy responses interact, and to assess how policy actors were engaging with issues concerning family change.

The coordinating team undertook comparative analysis of the secondary materials (quantitative data and policy context information) collected using these two approaches. National level data were compared across countries and in relation to the EU average to situate national trends and identify similarities and differences (see *Cross-National Research Papers*, 6.1, 6.2).

To complement and supplement the statistical and contextual data, a series (up to 20) of elite interviews were conducted in each country with selected political, economic and civil society policy actors, including politicians at national and local level, government officials, representatives of employers, trade unions, service providers and NGOs.

The interviews covered questions concerned with the legitimacy of policy intervention (proactive, permissive / prohibitive, responsive) in family life; policy options and instruments with a family impact; family policy priorities and issues regarding targeting of particular family forms; the involvement of economic actors and NGOs in family policy; the impact of EU policy on national-level actors; procedures for monitoring and coordinating family policy; and the relative importance of financial, economic, political, legal and socio-cultural factors in the decision-making process (see *Cross-National Research Papers*, 6.3).

The second stage of the research involved fieldwork, using telephone or postal interviews, focus groups and vignettes, to examine the behaviour of families from different socio-economic groups exposed to a variety of living arrangements and policy experiences. Partners were invited to choose the methods they wished to adopt for the fieldwork, according to national practices: for example, the Polish and Greek partners considered that they would achieve a higher response rate by using postal surveys; the English and Irish partners employed commercial opinion survey organisations to carry out telephone surveys, and the French partners undertook secondary analysis of existing surveys in which they had participated rather than carrying out new fieldwork. Since an important aim was to cover a wide spectrum of respondents with a view to identifying individuals representing different family types for in-depth interviewing, variations in the methods used was acceptable and was not considered detrimental to the coherence of the project.

In cases where the required range of respondents identified in the surveys was insufficient for the in-depth interviews, partners had recourse to snowballing. Respondents were questioned about their awareness of

policy measures that might affect family life; their attitudes towards the legitimacy of state and other intervention in family life; the process whereby decisions are taken about family life; the effects of state and other intervention on family life in general; and the relative importance of specific policy measures for families.

The elite and family interviews were recorded and written up by the partners and / or research assistants under agreed headings. Transcriptions were not requested, but anonymised quotes that were considered particularly pertinent to the issues concerned were collected and used in reports and publications in the original language, if appropriate, or in translation.

Conceptual issues

Particular attention was devoted to conceptual issues at the research design stage (see *Cross-National Research Papers*, 6.1). At project meetings, partners were invited to explore the meanings of key concepts in different societal and linguistic settings, taking account of the ways in which context-specific traditions contribute to the social construction of phenomena. A number of the concepts were selected to exemplify societal differentiation, particularly between member and applicant states: biological ageing, lifelong learning, parenting skills, intergenerational solidarity, welfare dependency, informal economy, labour market concentration and segregation, reconciliation of paid and unpaid work, distribution of household labour and individualisation of social rights.

The project was also interested in identifying indicators of societal coherence by studying the relationship between social phenomena and their socio-cultural settings. Some of the more problematic indicators used in the project to track family change were discussed in buzz groups in the early stages of the project. They were grouped around the topics that were central to the themes of the project: family forms, fertility, population ageing and aspects of labour market activity and inactivity that impinge on family life.

Data collection and analysis

The research design and selection of the participants raised a number of issues for data collection and comparative analysis. Although the country mix was quite broad, taking the nation as the context for comparative policy analysis can be problematic, due to the specific ways in which national legal, political, economic and socio-cultural systems have developed and operate.

Comparisons of quantitative data are known to be problematic even when supposedly harmonised international data sources are used, since data collection methods differ from one country to another, and definitions of statistical categories change over time. As anticipated, reliable time series data were practically impossible to find for the applicant states, since the statistics assembled during the Soviet era could not be validated. Almost all the key areas in the project proved difficult to track and record. Comparable data on population decline and ageing over time and across countries were unreliable due to discrepancies and changes in definitions for the main indicators measuring fertility rates and life expectancy. Although United Nations' definitions of families and households had been widely adopted, discrepancies were still found for many indicators, both between and within countries from one data source to another and over time. The comparability of measurements of alternative family forms, including lone parenthood, extramarital births, unmarried cohabitation and reconstituted families, was particularly problematic. Measurement of gender differences involved analysis of a large number of indicators, raising issues of comparability over time and space due to discrepancies in sources, definitions and their application. In several cases, it was recognised that the quality of data could not be improved and that extreme caution would have to be exercised in using the available data in comparisons.

The interviews with family actors in the second stage of the project involved lengthy discussion about sampling, delivery, the appropriateness of questions and their formulation. In a project concerned with the impact of policy on families with different living arrangements, identifying and gaining access to families with the range of experience required presented a number of problems. The sensitivity of the information being sought (how decisions about family formation and dissolution are taken, and the place of policy among the factors influencing socio-demographic behaviour) gives rise to methodological problems in single-nation studies. In an international comparative project, they become especially challenging.

The comparative analysis carried out using the materials collected throughout the project across the 11 participating countries was structured around the four themes that had been addressed throughout the project: population decline and ageing, changing family forms, changing gender and intergenerational relations.

For each theme, an analysis was made of the data collected on socio-economic trends and associated issues that were already, or were expected to become, of concern for policy practitioners, together with the challenges they present. Current and projected policy responses were explored, covering the formulation and implementation of prohibitive, permissive, pre-emptive and proactive policy measures, followed by an analysis of the imputed outcomes of policies in terms of their perceived impacts on family life, and concluding with a review of proposals for further policy development.

The analysis highlighted variations over time between EU member states and between the three candidate countries not only in the understanding of concepts, but also in the salience of different issues and the political and societal interest shown in them by different policy actors. It was possible to identify groupings or clusters of member states that shared certain characteristics with regard to particular socio-demographic phenomena and political processes, while also assessing the position of individual countries in relation to a European mean (see *Cross-National Research Papers*, 6.7).

Interpretation and dissemination of findings

In interpreting the findings, the project team remained alert to the fact that it was not possible to generalise from a small number of individual (national) cases or to infer causal relationships. They could not assume that, if the phenomenon under observation was explained in one country by a particular combination of contextual factors, the same phenomenon in another country was necessarily due to the same causes. Nor would a specific policy automatically have the same outcome if applied in a different socio-economic context. However, if recurring patterns could be found within certain clusters of countries, both in terms of inputs and outputs, then it was considered possible to justify some extrapolation of policy practices between countries that had undergone similar policy processes.

For the dissemination conference, case studies of policy learning and development were prepared, weaving together the findings from the materials collected throughout the project. Team members commented on the policy issues and challenges being addressed by specific policy measures, and looked at the potential for policy transfer. The case studies highlighted the diversity in the pace and intensity of socio-economic change and in approaches to family policy, before going on to examine the circumstances under which policy transfer takes place at European and national level, and the conditions under which it is most likely to be effective.

The project concluded by reflecting on the lessons that could be drawn from the research about ways of improving the efficacy of policies that impact on family life, and these were written up in the final report.

In addition to the statutory reports to the Commission (see European Commission, Directorate-General for Research, 2004), the findings from the project were disseminated in a number of ways: at the end of the award, the dissemination conference mentioned above was held in Loughborough, to which stakeholders from the participating countries were invited; end-user dialogue workshops for civil society actors were used in the final year of the project to make presentations of the findings in selected partner countries where civil society was less involved in family policy; seven issues of *Cross-National Research Papers*, were published during the project and were made available as pdf files on the project web site (subsequently moved to www.xnat.org.uk); a number of papers were published in a special issue of *Social Policy and Society* in 2003 (2.3); edited books were published in Estonia, Greece and Poland; numerous papers were presented and published at international events and in international journals; an eight-page A4 brochure was published and widely circulated summarising the 'IPOSEC Findings'.

Lessons learned

The value of having followed through the stated aim in the Iprosec proposal of tracking and recording the research process was amply demonstrated by the comments made by the Commission's evaluator of the final Iprosec report. Special mention was made of the 'very serious approach' to methodological issues; the efforts made to involve and train less experienced researchers were highlighted, as were the theoretical grounding, coherence, complementarities and transparency of the research methods, the quality and timeliness of the deliverables and the effectiveness in dealing with the challenges of international comparative research.

More specific examples of lessons learned from the Iprosec project are the need to:

- remain mindful of the impact on findings of decisions taken throughout the research process, whether it be in the choice of comparators and team members, research design, methods of data collection, analytical techniques or interpretation of data;
- decide at the outset whether the project is intended to be comparative and plan accordingly;

- ensure that the proposal is feasible and tractable in view of the resources available;
- be responsive to the interests and priorities of potential funders
- be aware of the many challenges that are likely to be raised by the project and think through them collectively at the outset;
- assemble a team of researchers with experience of working together in international contexts and with diverse but complementary and appropriate linguistic, cultural and scientific backgrounds;
- ensure that team members are able to access the data required and ensure the compatibility of data;
- spend time at project meetings discussing cultural expectations and agreeing working practices;
- factor in training in the methods to be used in the project for data collection and analysis;
- avoid generalisations and extrapolation that are not supported by the research design and data;
- allow for adjustments to be made to research design and methods, if necessary, as the research progresses;
- ensure that team members know at the outset how data and findings will be exploited;
- factor in time in the final phase of the project schedule for producing and disseminating a variety of outputs;
- remain flexible in accommodating the individual needs of team members without jeopardising the integrity of the project.

References

- European Commission, Directorate-General for Research (2004) *Improving Policy Responses and Outcomes to Socio-Economic challenges: changing family structures, policy and practice (Iprosec)*, EU Research on Social Sciences and Humanities series (EUR 21105). http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/improving-policy-responses_en.pdf/ June 2012.
- Hantrais, L. (2004) *Family Policy Matters: responding to family change in Europe*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Cross-National Research Papers* (1985–2005) seven series: www.xnat.org.uk/ June 2012.
- Cross-National Research Papers* (1999) vol 5: Socio-demographic Change, Social and Economic Policies in the European Union, nos 1–4.
- Cross-National Research Papers* (2000–2003) vol 6: Improving Policy Responses and Outcomes to Socio-Economic Challenges: changing family structures, policy and practice, nos 1–7 www.xnat.org.uk/ June 2012.