European Study of Adult Well-Being: (ESAW)

CONTEXTUALISING ADULT WELL-BEING IN EUROPE: REPORT ON SOCIO-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN ESAW NATIONS

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Executive Summary

This report addresses key socio-cultural differences between European Union (EU) nations as a means of contextualising the empirical findings of the European Study of Adult Well-being (ESAW). Particular emphasis is placed on the six nations participating in ESAW – Austria, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom (UK). In this respect, an understanding of cross-cultural variation underpins any attempt to generalise findings from different models of *ageing well*, and acts as a precondition for recommending the potential sharing of social policies, institutional structures or good practices between nations.

Drawing on a conceptual model developed by Mellens (1999a: 8), this report seeks to highlight some of the complex interactions between national characteristics (such as aspects of culture, and political and social policy systems), the key demographic components and the outcome variables of *ageing well* and national age structures. The report consists of three parts. The first part describes aspects of the demography of ageing for the EU-nations. The second part focuses on the geographical context of ageing. The third part addresses characteristics of the political and social policy systems of EU / ESAW nations.

**Demography of Ageing**

Analysis of demographic trends in the EU / ESAW countries reveals elements both of uniformity and diversity between European nations:

*Unity highlights*

- All European nations are characterised by a growing importance of older people in society both in absolute numbers and in proportion.
- Population ageing in Europe is mainly the result of a substantial drop in fertility. Fertility has fallen to well below replacement level, increasing the probability of population decline in the long-term.
- Life expectancy is increasing for both men and women throughout the EU; women still significantly outnumber men in the oldest age groups.
- The older population is ageing itself; this will become the main determinant of further population ageing.
- The heterogeneity of the older population is increasing in relation to such characteristics as age itself, ethnicity and household composition.

*Diversity highlights*

- Despite being a relatively late moderniser, Italy is now the EU’s most aged country, mainly because of a very low fertility level.
- Italy can be characterised as a regime with a high focus on familism, which may paradoxically play an important role in the relatively low numbers of births. On the other hand multi-generational households are still quite common.
- Although Sweden sits alongside Italy at the top of the list of the most aged countries, in many respects these countries strongly diverge. Sweden experienced an early drop in fertility, achieving high life expectancy for both...
women and men relatively early on, and is associated with a strong degree of de-
familization which enables women to combine family building with employment. Sweden is also notable for the relative infrequency of household types in which older people live with persons other than their partner.

• The remaining ESAW countries can be regarded as a heterogeneous ‘Western Europe’ cluster, with both characteristics of familism and de-familization, and a relatively intermediate aged population compared with Sweden and Italy. Luxembourg and the Netherlands are less aged.

• Luxembourg and the Netherlands show relatively high fertility levels. The UK is notable for its relatively low life expectancy, especially for women. Austria shows remarkable similarities with Italy in relation to household composition.

The Geographical Context of Ageing
Discussion of the geographical context of ageing highlights the necessity of incorporating an understanding of culture in approaches to modelling *ageing well*. This is a key message arising from the analysis of researchers such as Torres (1999) who argue that concepts such as ageing well need to consider variations in value orientations and political, economic and religious systems as foundations for understanding adult well-being.

• An understanding of culture is especially relevant within the European context, where cultural diversity remains strong despite the influence of socio-economic processes that tend to promote homogeneity. The report emphasises that such diversity has been a remarkably persistent feature of European society. Despite the upheavals associated with socio-economic modernisation and military conflict, Europe’s geographical and cultural boundaries have remained fairly stable over a long period.

• Elements of Europe’s cultural diversity are clearly evident in relation to the different clusters to which EU and ESAW countries belong. These clusters are discussed in the report with reference to earlier comparative analyses undertaken by social scientists from a range of different disciplines. Analyses of national approaches to public policy, socio-economic and cultural dimensions, value orientations and family structures point to the persisting relevance of the nation as a context for *ageing well*. While there are clear similarities between groups of nations in relation to particular domains, no two nations are identical across all domains.

• The importance of diversity at a national level is further emphasised by an examination of the regional context. This is addressed in terms of urban and rural dimensions, and by an analysis of the differential impact of migration patterns on European regions. The regionalisation of urbanisation in Europe represents a key theme. In general, mobility rates and economic shifts reflect the importance of regionalisation in the ESAW countries. In this respect, while all ESAW countries can be classed as post-industrial societies, the relative importance of industrial production in the economies of Austria, Italy and Luxembourg, and the persisting role played by agriculture in the national economies of Italy and Austria should not be overlooked.

Overview of Political and Social Policy Systems
National political and social policy systems can be seen to exert a direct impact on adult well-being, whilst also influencing the development of national age structures.
The analysis of such systems within the EU / ESAW nations confirms a pattern of cross-national similarity existing alongside significant variation between countries in terms of both their political structures and social policy systems.

**Political systems**

- While democratic systems evolved slowly over time in four nations (UK, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden), such systems were imposed by external actors in Italy and Austria.
- A moderate multi-party system predominates in Austria, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden. While Italy is judged to be in a state of transition in relation to its party system, the UK has an established two-party system. Of the ESAW nations, only Austria has a fully developed federal structure, although the remaining nations show increasing signs of regionalisation of governance.
- Overall, the analysis suggests a striking degree of similarity between Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden in terms of their political systems. Austria and Italy also share some common features. The UK stands out as having a political system that differs in key ways from that of other ESAW nations.

**Social policy systems**

- Despite similarities between European nations in terms of the state’s involvement in social policy, and recognition that such involvement is universal, there continues to be substantial variation between nations’ social policy systems. This can partly be attributed to the historical development of such systems, which has occurred under the influence of a complex range of factors that vary from policy to policy and country to country across time periods. The diverse pathways that led, and still lead, to the development of welfare states continue to exert a major influence on contemporary social policy.
- Although European nations experienced different paths to the welfare state, it is possible to group nations together according to broad characteristics of their social policy systems.
- In the ESAW study, the UK represents an isolated example of an Anglo-Saxon welfare state that displays residual characteristics. The result is a high degree of inequality in old age, and relatively limited resources devoted to health and social care.
- This contrasts with the Nordic model, represented here by Sweden. While the Swedish welfare state has been subject to change in recent years, there is still evidence of its universalistic characteristics in the way in which it provides for the material and social well-being of its citizens.
- The remaining ESAW nations can be located between these poles. While the Netherlands displays elements of the Nordic model in relation to universalistic provision of key benefits and services, its social security system is based on the aim of maintaining individuals’ existing positions in the social hierarchy. Austria and Luxembourg correspond most closely to the traditional corporatist model of a welfare state. Italy represents something of a paradox. Alongside its ‘Bismarckian’ social security system and a universal system of health care, it maintains a social care system founded on a traditional familistic model.
Conclusions
Analysis of a range of factors underlying a contextual understanding of *ageing well* reveals a remarkable degree of diversity across the EU / ESAW nations. While it is possible to group nations together on some key characteristics, there is considerable variation when other factors are drawn in. The challenge in interpreting the results of the empirical analysis of ESAW data is to locate these findings firmly within this contextual framework. Not only will it be necessary to provide explanations for cross-national variation based on contextual differences, but it will also be important to develop an understanding of why cross-national similarities arise despite the existence of such contextual differences.
Contextualising Adult Well-being in Europe:
Report on Socio-cultural Differences in ESAW Nations

Part 1. Introduction

The six-nation European Study of Adult Well-being (ESAW) represents a regional component of the Global Ageing Initiative. Designed as a comparative, cross-cultural study of ageing, the ultimate goal of ESAW is to discover the degree to which different explanatory models of ‘ageing well’ fit within participating European nations. In developing these models, adult well-being is to be related to five key components (physical health and functional status, mental efficacy, life activity, material security and social support), as well as individuals’ personal characteristics (age and sex) and the geographical context in which they live. The geographical context is to be studied at two levels: the difference between rural and urban local environments and the difference between nations.

The findings of ESAW are aimed at two audiences. At one level, ESAW is a scientific enterprise that seeks to develop knowledge within the field of social and cultural gerontology. At a second level, the outcomes of the ESAW project are intended to influence the development of public policy and practice across Europe in relation to aspects of professional care and services for older people. The degree to which ESAW is able to make recommendations about ways in which policy and practice might develop in different European nations requires detailed consideration of the socio-cultural context. Indeed, a thorough understanding of cross-cultural differences underpins any attempt to generalise findings from the models of ageing well, and acts as a precondition for recommending the potential sharing of social policies, institutional structures or good practices between nations (De Jong, Lalenis and Mamadouh, 2002).

In order to provide a suitable context for other outputs from the ESAW project, this report focuses on key socio-cultural differences between European Union (EU) nations. Particular emphasis is placed on the six nations participating in ESAW – Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Sweden and the United Kingdom (UK), (see Figure 1.1). In addition to these countries, Greece and Malta are also engaged in the Global Ageing Initiative.

1 The ESAW Project was designed as part of the Global Ageing Initiative, initiated by the Indiana University Center on Aging and Aged, under the directorship of Dr. Barbara Hawkins. The aim of this parent project is to develop a globally applicable model of Ageing Well, estimating the direct causal contribution of five key components, personal characteristics and culture to the outcome variable Ageing Well. The five components included in the study are: (1) physical health and functional status; (2) cognitive efficacy; (3) material security; (4) social support resources; and (5) life activity.

ESAW, funded by the European Union under the Framework V Programme (contract: QLRT-2001-00280), represents a European sub-group of the larger global study, which aims to develop a European model of Adult Well-being, using the five key components and parallel methodology. The ESAW partner countries are: Austria, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The work has been co-ordinated by Professor G. Clare Wenger, of the University of Wales, Bangor, United Kingdom.

The views presented in this report are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not represent the opinion of the European Community. The Community is not responsible for any use that might be made of data appearing in the report.
In general, differences between geographical entities, like nations, can be approached by making a distinction between compositional and contextual explanations (Shaw, Dorling and Mitchell, 2002). In compositional explanations, differences between characteristics of the population of geographical entities (for instance health) are explained by relevant differences in population composition (such as age distribution). Contextual explanations relate such differences in characteristics of national populations to characteristics of the nations (such as the
health system). So certain differences between nations can be relatively easily explained with reference to knowledge about differences between social groups within the nation and the composition of the national population with respect to these groups. In general, national differences in the comparative ESAW-reports with respect to adult well-being and characteristics with respect to the five components of well-being will reflect relevant differences in national population composition.

The central focus of this report is on generating contextual explanations for differences between EU/ESAW nations with respect to ageing. However, measuring contextual factors is difficult. It is also difficult to judge the significance of their influence on national data and the relative importance of explanations by compositional factors and explanations by contextual factors. The contribution of this report to the ESAW-project is to develop a better understanding of national patterns of statistical explanation between adult well-being and characteristics in the five domains and relevant independent personal characteristics. These national patterns can be described in contingency tables or summarised in national models of ageing well, or in a European model of ageing well with nation as an independent variable at a nominal level of measurement.

Despite long-standing recognition of the merits associated with cross-national studies in social gerontology (IAG, 1956), and some notable studies (e.g. Shanas et al., 1968), it is only relatively recently that there has been a burgeoning of comparative research on ageing (see Scharf and Wenger, 2000). This contrasts with the long tradition of cross-national studies in other social science disciplines, such as sociology, political science and especially human geography. Comparative cross-national methodology can be defined as ‘an approach to knowing social reality through the examination for similarities and differences between data gathered from more than one nation’ (Elder, 1976: 210). Depending on one’s philosophical premise three different approaches can be identified:

- an approach focused on national uniqueness and cross-national contrasts;
- an approach focused on cross-national subsets and limited cross-national comparability;
- an approach focused on cross-national similarities and cross-national comparability.

Holding the premise that social reality transcends cultural, geographical and temporal boundaries all three approaches can be employed (Elder, 1976).

In the ESAW study and in this report the concept of ageing well will be studied by describing the unique position of each of the ESAW nations as a part of the fifteen EU-nations, and by describing the ESAW nations as belonging to subsets of nations within the EU with a comparable situation with respect to ageing well. A third approach, which would generate a description of the EU-nations as a supra-national entity, is beyond the scope of this report. However, such an approach – that emphasises the potential existence of a ‘European social model’ – might become more important within the context of the wider Global Ageing Initiative, of which ESAW is part.
In this respect it is useful to consider the ‘families of nations’ concept developed by Francis Castles (1993). The idea that some nations are more similar to each other than others is well known. Clustering of nations is a common strategy adopted by social scientists in order to reduce complexity. A family however is more than a subset characterised by similarity. Castles suggests that countries with shared geographical, cultural, linguistic and historical experiences will tend to generate shared values and attitudes, falling within the same ‘family of nations’. A family has a style of formal legislation and informal conventions, which creates resemblance among its members (Castles, 1993). These characteristics ‘are related to the structural and philosophical roots of the family, legally, politically, administratively, culturally and perhaps even religiously and linguistically’ (De Jong and Mamadouh, 2002: 28). A key attraction of Castles’s approach is that countries which belong to a ‘family’ may be more or less close to other countries within the family (as in ordinary families). The relatively simple idea that nations can be grouped into broad families, and that such families share a number of similarities in relation to their cultural and socio-political development, holds the potential for explaining differences between nations and groups of nations in terms of the relative fit of scientific concepts such as *ageing well*.

A further useful device that relates directly to the ‘families of nations’ concept draws upon the analysis of Therborn (1993). He distinguishes four types of families:

- The *lineage* type, held together by descent from a common origin of some sort;
- The *separated* siblings, kindred nations kept apart by state boundaries;
- *Affinity* groups, elective comparable nations (*Wahlverwandtschaft*);
- *Partnerships*, unions of deliberate co-ordination.

The EU member states can be seen as a partnership family. However, looking for a pan-European culture and identity, politicians are stating common resources in its Greek, Roman and Judaeo-Christian heritage and the modern achievements of European civilization (Robins, 1999). In this way European countries are seen as a lineage type family. A country and a set of countries with characteristics of various types of families can be labelled ‘hybrid’ (Lalenis, De Jong and Mamadouh, 2003).

This report consists of three parts. Its framework, described in Figure 1.2, is loosely based on a conceptual model developed by Mellens (1999a: 8). This seeks to highlight the complex interactions between national context characteristics (such as aspects of culture, and political and social policy systems), the key demographic components and the outcome variables of *ageing well* and national age structures. It is beyond the scope of this report to describe in detail all such possible interactions. In particular, the impact of socio-economic dimensions, though acknowledged, receives less attention than other themes.

The first part (Section 2) describes the demography of ageing for the EU-nations, with a particular focus on the ESAW countries. In addition to a description of population structure (age and gender), the section addresses the development of two important demographic components: fertility and life expectancy. These components, together with migration, represent key determinants of the (future) ageing of national populations (Mellens, 1999a). This part concludes with discussion
of household structures as they relate to the situation of older people, and a critical
analysis of debates about the socio-economic impacts of ageing populations within
the European Union.

The second part (Section 3) focuses on the geographical context of ageing. Starting
with a description of the underlying dimensions of two of the three demographic
components – the socio-economic dimensions and the cultural dimension – for EU
countries, these dimensions are also related to the concept of *ageing well*. The
section also encompasses a discussion of the third demographic component,
migration, and of urbanisation in EU-nations. Although migration to and from the EU-
nations is of growing importance for national differences in ageing, it is rather more
important in relation to the redistribution of populations within nations, between
regions and between urban and rural local environments.

The focus of the third part (Section 4) is on relevant characteristics of the political
and social policy systems of EU / ESAW-nations. Policy systems can be regarded as
a third dimension that contributes to the understanding of national population
dynamics, i.e. the development of the national age structures. However, to be
effective ‘a policy needs to be rooted in the cultural value system of the population
and should be in line with economic processes’ (Mellens, 1999a: 6). A better
understanding of national differences in *ageing well* requires a more explicit
description of the relevant national political and social policy contexts. In this respect
there is a significant relation with the cultural and socio-economic dimensions. The
report ends with a brief conclusion (Section 5).
Part 2. Demography of Ageing

The process of ageing is the most powerful demographic phenomenon facing societies this century and represents a new phenomenon in the history of mankind. At one level, ageing can be regarded as an individual process, through which people reach longer life expectancy. At a macro level, the ageing process also affects whole populations. Both the absolute number of older adults and their relative proportion in society have considerably increased in the modern age. Equally, the consequences of ageing are discernable at a micro- as well as the macro-level, ranging from specifically demographic consequences to psychological, medical, social, cultural, economic, political and environmental impacts (Golini, 1997; Golini and Bruno, 1999). The focus of this section is on the macro-level of the ageing process.

The broad aim is to provide a general overview of the main characteristics of the ageing population for the 15 EU member states with particular emphasis on the situation in the six ESAW-countries. Attention is paid first to the changing population structure (Section 2.1). We then proceed to examine the key factors underpinning these changes, by addressing developments in fertility (Section 2.2) and mortality (Section 2.3). Although international migration has historically been the most important contributor to population growth in Europe and continues to play an important role in cultural transformations, the effect of migration on the ageing process itself is relatively modest (United Nations, 2001). Hence, migration will be discussed as part of cultural differentiation in its geographical context (Section 3.3). Directly related to demographic change, however, are changing household structures and old-age dependency ratios. These represent important contextual variables in relation to discussions of ageing well, and are discussed in Section 2.4.

2.1 Population Structure

Although there is some debate about the question of the degree to which the use of new methods of contraception has affected post-war fertility trends (see Coleman, 1996), some demographers like to stress that, initially, ageing is the outcome of two positive processes: control of early death, and control of unwanted births (Golini, 1997). Put another way, ageing can be regarded as the consequence of a declining natural in-flow and out-flow of individuals in a certain population. The transformation by which the number of young people is declining and the number of older people is increasing to such an extent that older adults (aged 60 years and over) outnumber young people (those under the age of 20 years) is unprecedented in the history of humankind (see Figure 2.1).

Europe has a unique position in the ageing of the world population. This was the region in which the demographic change manifested itself first, and Europe currently has the highest proportion of older people in the world. Italy, for example, was one of the first countries in the world where the number of older people outweighed the number of young people. The prospect is that Europe will retain this leading position for at least the
next 50 years (United Nations, 2001). On the other hand, when compared with the (expected) process in the less developed regions of the world, the ageing process in the developed countries appears rather slow and relatively small. In developing regions, ageing is taking place in a much shorter period of time and is occurring on a relatively large population base (United Nations, 2001).

While all societies need to adapt themselves to the demographic transformation, as a consequence of differences in starting time, speed and rate of the ageing process, European nations also face their own specific challenges. Figure 2.2 shows the increase in proportions of the population aged 60 years and above for the six ESAW countries over the last four decades. The different position of Italy finds expression in a change from a low percentage to the highest percentage. As with Italy, Sweden showed a relatively strong increase in the proportion of older adults during the 1960s and 1970s. However, this process more or less stabilised after the mid-1980s, whereas Italy has still to reach its peak. The Netherlands has also witnessed a clear increase in the share of older adults. However, this process can best be described as one of ‘catching up with the others’.

At the start of the Twenty-First Century, about 22% of the EU-population was 60 years of age or over. When the age limit of the ESAW project is used, namely 50 years and over, the percentage of older adults in the EU nations reaches almost 34%. Table 2.1 gives an overview of the age structure of the oldest age groups within the countries and their respective rankings. This highlights a degree of cross-national variation in relation to the structure of the older population itself. Although Italy usually is regarded as the most aged country, because the age-range of 60 years and older is applied, Sweden is notable for its relatively large proportion of the oldest old (those aged 80 years and over). The UK also has a relatively large group of people in this age category. By contrast, Luxembourg and the Netherlands have relatively few people aged 80 and above.
Table 2.1 Proportion of total population by age group, EU / ESAW countries, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>50+</th>
<th>60+</th>
<th>80+</th>
<th>Total population (in thousands)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium (5)</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>10,239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark (12)</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>5,330</td>
</tr>
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<td>Germany (3)</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>82,163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece (2)</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>10,542</td>
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<td>Spain (6)</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>39,441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France (8)</td>
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<td>20.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>59,225</td>
</tr>
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<td>Ireland (17)</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3,776</td>
</tr>
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<td>Italy (1)</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>57,679</td>
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<tr>
<td>Luxembourg (13)</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>435</td>
</tr>
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<td>30.8</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
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<td>20.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
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<td>2.8</td>
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<td>20.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>59,623</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**EU-15**  
33.7  
21.6  
3.7  
376,455

(x) = rank based on proportion of people aged 60 and over  
*Source*: Eurostat (2001)

The number of older people is the result of the number of births six or more decades earlier and the subsequent survival of these persons (excluding the fluctuations in a given region as a result of migration). Hence, to give more insight into the changing age structure in Europe and the differences between countries, trends in both fertility and mortality will be discussed in the following two sections.

### 2.2 Fertility decline

Fluctuations in the number of births are commonly perceived as a reaction to social, economic, technological and cultural changes. While some of these trends have been similar across European countries, their timing and intensity is prone to variation. This is evident, for example, in relation to changes in economic structures and the industrialisation process, the declining role of religion, and the improving status of women. The concept of the Demographic Transition, associated with Van de Kaa (1999) and Lesthaeghe (1993), links changes in fertility to a broader concept of modernization in which the value orientation of society is seen as the main underlying dimension. This has been expressed by Bosveld (1996: 35) in the following terms:

‘The prevailing values and norms determine largely whether new techniques are accepted and new structures amplified. […] Institutional endowment is mainly responsible for between-country variations in fertility patterns, because each country has its own characteristic cultural development.’

However, specific historical and political events, such as war, also affect the numbers of births and the size and composition of particular cohorts, and may have
long-term effects in shaping the age structure of a population (Coleman, 1996; Grundy, 1996).

The First Demographic Transition is labelled as an ‘altruistic’ period in which concerns for family and offspring dominated. Reduction in family size reflected a shift from quantity to quality. From the 1920s until after the 1940s, most European countries had relatively low birth rates. This changed after the Second World War, when fertility levels rose strongly, typically peaking in the mid-1960s, and creating a so-called ‘baby-boom’ generation.

The four decades since have been marked by a dramatic decline in fertility rates (Table 2.2). Birth rates in many countries are now well below replacement level (taken to be around 2.1 births per women at the prevailing mortality rates (Champion, 1998)). Van de Kaa speaks of The Second Demographic Transition: a new disequilibrium between births and deaths. The transition is now labelled as a development towards ‘individualistic’ norms, in which emphasis is placed on the rights and self-fulfilment of the individual (Van de Kaa, 1999).

Table 2.2 Total Fertility Rate, EU / ESAW countries, 1960-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
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<td>1.95</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
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<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.21</td>
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<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
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<td>2.90</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
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<td>2.47</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3.93</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
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<td>2.42</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.49</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
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<td>1.60</td>
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<td>1.65</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2.18</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.92</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>2.13</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EU-15**

|        | 2.59 | 2.38 | 1.82 | 1.57 | 1.53 |

*Source: Eurostat (2001)*

The degree of modernization is often measured with the help of context variables such as female labour participation levels, educational levels, cohabitation degree, contraceptive use, childcare facilities and so forth. Income and educational level appear to have an inverse relationship with fertility. Especially better educated women tend to have fewer children and delay giving birth to their first child until a later moment in life (Alders, 1999; De Jong and Broekman, 1999). In general, postponement of births, fertility at older ages and voluntary childlessness are seen as characteristics of modern demographic behaviour.
Although within Europe demographic trends point in the same direction, there are still significant differences between countries (Figure 2.3). The Scandinavian countries, especially Sweden, are seen as the forerunners in fertility trends (Bosveld, 1996; De Jong and Broekman, 1999). Being the first countries to show a drop below replacement level, they now have a relatively moderate fertility level combined with high female labour participation, and belong to a so-called ‘Nordic model’. Esping-Andersen (1999) speaks of the great paradox of our times. The correlation between fertility and women’s paid employment is now the opposite of what might be expected: the higher the rate of female employment, the greater the level of fertility. To explain this paradox, Esping-Andersen stresses cross-national differences in welfare systems, in this case, the degree to which social policy frees women from the burden of family obligations (de-familization). Defamilization enables parents, and especially women, to combine parenthood and work. They can make use of day-care facilities, and maternity and parental leave are of reasonable length and largely paid. Good opportunities to work part-time are also available (Bosveld, 1996).

Fertility trends in Western Europe followed the Scandinavian countries. However, countries remained far from uniform. Female participation in the labour market, for example, was extremely low in the Netherlands and hardly increased until the late 1980s. While relatively high fertility levels are (still) found in the Netherlands, Luxembourg and the UK, Austria currently has a relatively low fertility rate.

Italy, as an example of the southern countries, experienced the modernization process and fertility decline with some time lag, but has now reached an extremely low fertility level, which only recently has appeared to stabilise (Vinay et al., 1991). However, under the influence of Catholic social teaching, ‘modern’ behaviour such as extra-marital fertility, divorce, cohabitation, and contraceptive use, are still quite uncommon (Bosveld, 1996). When combined with a familistic policy, which emphasises family responsibility for their members’ welfare (Esping-Andersen, 1999), and the absence of day-care facilities and suitable opportunities for part-time working, this results in a relatively strong focus on the own family, albeit often with just one child.
As past fertility rates have been the basis of the present number of older adults, so current fertility rates largely determine the number of older adults in the future. Although fertility rates in most countries appear to have reached their low points and are predicted to rise again (Table 2.3), it is anticipated that the rates will stay well below replacement-level for the next decades.

Table 2.3 Predicted Total Fertility Rate, EU / ESAW countries,\(^1\) 2000-2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal(^2)</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) All forecasts have been compiled and/or published during 1992-2001 (observed values are presented in italics)

2) Baseline scenario of Eurostat’s long-term population scenarios, compiled in 2000

This scenario is associated with at least two other implications. First, because of fairly stable (low) fertility, the fertility rate will become less influential in shaping the age structure of future populations. Instead, trends in mortality, particularly at older ages, become the major determinant of further population ageing (Grundy, 1996). Second, with fertility rates well below replacement level and an increasing number of people at old age, the number of deaths will sooner or later start to exceed the number of births. Although it is not clear to what extent ageing will affect population growth in Europe, and especially in individual countries (Champion, 1998; Van Hoorn et al., 1999), Eurostat projections show at least a slowing down of natural growth and for Germany, Italy and Spain already even a small decline before 2010. It is expected that natural population decline will not be counterbalanced by inward migration (Eurostat, 2001).

2.3  Mortality decline

As trends in fertility affect the natural inflow of persons in a population, so changes at the other end of the life spectrum – death rates – affect the outflow of persons. Infant mortality rates exert the opposite effect to fertility rates in relation to ageing. The lower the mortality at young age, the larger the group that can reach old age. This particular mortality rate is seen as an important indicator for the quality of the health services and, more generally, the social conditions within a country. During the last
For forty years of the Twentieth Century, European living standards greatly improved. As a result, the average infant mortality rate fell from 34.5 per thousand live births in 1960 to a figure of 4.9 per thousand in 2000. With traditionally high infant mortality rates in the southern EU-nations, these countries were very successful in eliminating the backlog. The northern member states have the lowest rates of between 3 and 4 deaths per thousand births. The rest of Europe is likely to achieve this low level in the near future (Eurostat, 2001).

Partly as a result of declining infant mortality, the average life expectancy at birth has increased steadily in Europe. The progress was most rapid in the early post-war period, slowing in the late 1960s and increasing again from the mid-1970s (Champion, 1998). Between 1960 and 1999, men gained on average 7.5 years in the EU, and women 8.3 years.

Table 2.4 Life expectancy at birth, EU / ESAW countries, 1960-1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
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<td>73.5</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>74.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>75.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>69.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
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<td>:</td>
<td>67.3</td>
</tr>
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<td>Spain</td>
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<td>72.2</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>74.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>75.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>68.1</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>73.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>72.3</td>
<td>69.0</td>
<td>74.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
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<td>72.2</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td>73.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>75.3</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>76.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>66.5</td>
<td>73.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
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<td>66.8</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>70.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>66.5</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
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<td>74.9</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>77.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>73.7</td>
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</tr>
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<td>EU-15</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>72.9</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>74.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Eurostat 2001

In general, in countries where life expectancy was traditionally above average, the gains were smallest in the past decades. This applied, for example, to the ESAW countries of the Netherlands and Sweden. On the other hand, some countries with a relatively low life expectancy in the 1960s succeeded in achieving a greater increase. Italy, Luxembourg and Austria witnessed significant gains in life expectancy over the final decades of the Twentieth Century. Nevertheless, differences between countries are still pronounced.
Table 2.4 and Figure 2.4 also provide a clear illustration of the well-known phenomenon that women on average live longer than men. While women in most countries have a life expectancy of at least 80 years, for most men the limit is reached at an age of about 75. Only in Sweden is life expectancy for men – at 77 years – above this general figure. In Italy it is noteworthy that a relatively high life expectancy for women is not matched to the same degree by a high life expectancy of men.

Differences in life expectancy are even clearer when examining further life expectancy at age 60. This second measurement is relevant to show the changing structure of the older population itself. As noted in *World Population Ageing 1950-2050* (United Nations, 2001), not only are more people surviving to old age, but once there, they tend to live longer (see Table 2.5).

### Table 2.5 Life expectancy at age 60, EU / ESAW countries, 1960-1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tr>
<td>Spain*</td>
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<td>16.8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>23.4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>16.2</td>
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<td>16.7</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>18.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy**</td>
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<td>19.1</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>18.9</td>
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<td>21.3</td>
<td>18.0</td>
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<td>19.8</td>
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<td>20.4</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>21.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>20.4</td>
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<td>21.8</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = 1998 ** = 1997
Source: Eurostat 2001

Across the EU, men who reach the age of 60 now live on average 3.6 years longer than they did in 1960. In the same period, women gained 4.8 years. For men the prospects are evidently more restricted. Of the ESAW nations, men in Sweden have the longest life expectancy at age 60 (20.4 years).
Overall, in proportional terms, the gains in life expectancy in old age are higher than the gains at birth. In other words, the older population is ageing itself, as will also be manifested in an increasing number of centenarians. Ageing, in combination with the current levels of fertility, will alter the demographic structure well into the Twenty-First Century. At least the relative importance of the older age groups will continue to increase. The ranking in Table 2.6 is, again, based on the percentage of people aged 60 years and over, this time up to 2020. Italy is predicted to maintain its leading position, and by this year also the oldest age group will be relatively the largest in this country. Sweden also maintains its high ranking. Austria will climb in the ranking, whereas Luxembourg and the Netherlands remain relatively less aged. Only by 2020 are these countries likely to reach the level of ageing already achieved by Italy.

Table 2.6 Proportion of total population by age group, EU / ESAW countries, 2000

| Country       | Total population (x1000) | 50+ | 60+ | 80+ | 2010 | 2020 | 2010 | 2020 | 2010 | 2020 | 2010 | 2020 |
|---------------|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Belgium (7)   | 10 338                   | 37.0| 40.5| 23.3| 26.5 | 4.9  | 5.4  |
| Denmark (11) | 7 540                    | 35.6| 38.5| 22.7| 24.8 | 4.1  | 4.3  |
| Germany (3)  | 80 152                   | 40.0| 45.9| 25.6| 29.0 | 4.9  | 6.6  |
| Greece (5)   | 10 806                   | 37.9| 42.0| 25.0| 27.6 | 5.0  | 6.4  |
| Spain (8)    | 39 331                   | 36.3| 41.9| 23.5| 26.4 | 5.0  | 5.6  |
| France (9)   | 61 280                   | 36.1| 39.3| 22.6| 25.9 | 5.1  | 5.3  |
| Ireland (15) | 4 416                    | 28.8| 33.1| 16.9| 20.5 | 2.7  | 3.0  |
| Italy (1)    | 58 042                   | 40.0| 46.1| 26.9| 30.2 | 5.9  | 7.7  |
| Luxembourg (13) | 488              | 34.7| 38.7| 21.1| 24.1 | 4.3  | 4.9  |
| Netherlands (12) | 17 492        | 34.7| 39.1| 21.2| 24.8 | 3.8  | 4.1  |
| Austria (6)  | 8 296                    | 36.6| 42.5| 23.4| 26.6 | 4.8  | 5.3  |
| Portugal (14) | 10 526                | 34.3| 37.5| 21.8| 24.0 | 3.8  | 4.4  |
| Finland (3)  | 5 907                    | 38.8| 42.4| 24.3| 29.0 | 4.3  | 4.9  |
| Sweden (4)   | 9 224                    | 38.6| 41.2| 26.0| 28.1 | 5.5  | 5.7  |
| United Kingdom (11) | 63 470        | 35.0| 39.7| 22.5| 25.1 | 4.5  | 5.0  |
| EU-15        | 384 898                  | 37.3| 42.1| 24.0| 27.1 | 4.9  | 5.8  |

1) All forecasts have been compiled and/or published during 1992-2001
2) Baseline scenario of Eurostat’s long term population scenarios, compiled in 2000
(x) = rank based on proportion of people aged 60 and over 2020

Source: Eurostat (2001)

2.4 Dependency Ratios and Household Composition

The ageing process is directly associated with a number of major changes in society. From an economic perspective, debate mostly focuses on the ageing of the labour force, and the expansion of the retired population (Champion, 1998). Particular concerns relate to the future financing of Europe’s public pension and health and social care systems (see also Section 4.2). The increasing pressure placed by a growing proportion of older people on a shrinking number of people of working age is often expressed through the device of the old age dependency ratio (Table 2.6). The ranking of ESWA-countries follows the by now clear pattern: with Italy and Sweden at the top, the UK and Austria adopting intermediate positions, and the Netherlands and Luxembourg with relatively modest ageing effects.
Table 2.7 Old age dependency ratio\textsuperscript{1)}, EU / ESAW countries, 1960-2000
\begin{tabular}{lcccccc}
Belgium (5) & 33.0 & 37.9 & 33.7 & 37.3 & 40.2 \\
Denmark (12) & 30.1 & 34.0 & 37.3 & 36.9 & 43.4 \\
Germany (4) & 31.7 & 39.2 & 35.9 & 35.1 & 41.3 \\
Greece (2) & 24.3 & 31.1 & 33.7 & 36.9 & 42.0 \\
Spain (6) & 23.6 & 27.7 & 29.7 & 35.7 & 38.1 \\
France (7) & 32.8 & 36.9 & 32.5 & 35.8 & 38.0 \\
Ireland (15) & 34.5 & 35.3 & 32.7 & 31.7 & 27.9 \\
Italy (1) & 24.9 & 30.5 & 32.0 & 37.1 & 42.5 \\
Luxembourg (13) & 29.1 & 35.2 & 31.9 & 32.7 & 33.8 \\
Netherlands (14) & 26.6 & 29.2 & 29.5 & 30.3 & 31.6 \\
Austria (10) & 34.8 & 41.0 & 37.0 & 36.3 & 35.9 \\
Portugal (9) & 22.1 & 28.0 & 31.0 & 35.5 & 37.0 \\
Finland (11) & 22.1 & 26.9 & 29.3 & 32.7 & 35.8 \\
Sweden (3) & 31.8 & 36.9 & 42.0 & 43.4 & 41.3 \\
United Kingdom (8) & 32.0 & 37.5 & 39.1 & 38.9 & 37.6 \\
\hline
EU-15 & 29.4 & 34.8 & 34.2 & 36.3 & 39.1 \\
\end{tabular}

\textsuperscript{1)} Population aged 60 and over as percentage of population aged 20-59
\((x) = \text{rank based on dependency ratio 2000}
\)

\textit{Source: Eurostat, 2001}

It is anticipated that in the northern and western regions of Europe (all ESAW-countries except Italy) old age dependency ratios will increase from a current figure of about 40 to around 60 in 2030. The southern region (ESAW country Italy) already has a relatively high ratio, and it is likely that the figure there will continue to rise to a maximum of about 80 in 2040 (Van Hoorn et al., 1999).

While the pressures associated with demographic change should be acknowledged, the wide use of relatively crude measures such as dependency ratios has come under increasing criticism, not only from gerontologists and social policy researchers but also from groups representing the interests of older people. There are two main forms of criticism (see George, 1996). A first critique seeks to take issue with the way in which dependency ratios are measured. In this respect, dependency ratios are based on a series of assumptions that are open to question (Bonoli et al., 2000: 130). In relation to demographic aspects, questions arise concerning the degree to which it is possible to predict future fertility or to anticipate levels of (in- and out-) migration. Doubts also arise concerning (overly pessimistic) predictions about the size and structure of the future working age population, or about the capacity of the economy to sustain an ageing population. Moreover, dependency ratios tend to homogenise a highly disparate older population. With increasing life expectancy and improving health, older people’s demands for health and social care resources do not necessarily increase disproportionally.

A second type of criticism of the use of dependency ratios is central to debates in social gerontology, and questions the notion that older people represent a ‘burden’ on society (see, for example, the work of Walker and Townsend). Here attention is focused upon the social construction of notions of burden, and tends to emphasise...
‘productive’ aspects of ageing and continued public support for the notion of an intergenerational contract (Phillipson, 1996). Social gerontologists have drawn attention to the many ways in which older people contribute to society. This contribution often goes unnoticed. Types of contribution include, for example, family support (child care to allow mothers to work; financial and emotional support to family members; care for partners who are frail), community activities (volunteering, political participation), and a range economic activities (older people as consumers of all types of resources).

Finally, such critiques of dependency point to the situation that it is enforced retirement that tends to generate dependency in the first place. Changes to the way in which the labour market is organised to allow greater participation of older people could alter the basis for the calculation of dependency ratios. Across Europe, elder interest groups are increasingly questioning whether older workers should continue to give way to youngsters.

Besides the relationship between the ageing process and economic changes, the ageing process is also associated with important social changes. One to be mentioned here is the change in household composition and family structure. Table 2.8 shows the variation in household types among the older population in the EU-countries.

Table 2.8 Men and women aged 65 and over and 75 and over by household type, EU/ ESAW countries, 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% of men/women in each age group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 65 and over</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple with at least one person 65+</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 or more people+Other</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                  |   |    |   |    |   |   |     |   |   |    |   |   |      |   |    |       |
| **Women**        |   |    |   |    |   |   |     |   |   |    |   |   |      |   |    |       |
| Aged 65 and over |   |    |   |    |   |   |     |   |   |    |   |   |      |   |    |       |
| Single           | 53 | 57 | 53 | 37 | 24 | 46 | 37  | 39 |   | 53 | 47 | 29 | 50   | 53 | 52 | 44    |
| Couple with at least one person 65+ | 39 | 42 | 39 | 42 | 41 | 43 | 42  | 41 |   | 43 | 29 | 39 | 44   | 47 | 43 | 41    |
| 3 or more people+Other | 8  | 1  | 8  | 21 | 35 | 11 | 21  | 20 |   | 3  | 24 | 31 | 6    | 0  | 6  | 15    |

|                  |   |    |   |    |   |   |     |   |   |    |   |   |      |   |    |       |
| **Men** Aged 75 and over |   |    |   |    |   |   |     |   |   |    |   |   |      |   |    |       |
| Single           | 36 | 40 | 22 | 21 | 13 | 25 | 31  | 16 |   | 32 | 22 | 21 | 31   | 33 | 35 | 24    |
| Couple with at least one person 75+ | 55 | 60 | 70 | 62 | 56 | 64 | 48  | 68 |   | 66 | 52 | 52 | 64   | 67 | 59 | 64    |
| 3 or more people+Other | 9  | 0  | 7  | 17 | 31 | 21 | 16  | .  | 2  | 26 | 27 | 5  | 0    | 6  | 12    |

|                  |   |    |   |    |   |   |     |   |   |    |   |   |      |   |    |       |
| **Women** Aged 75 and over |   |    |   |    |   |   |     |   |   |    |   |   |      |   |    |       |
| Single           | 72 | 73 | 69 | 50 | 28 | 61 | 46  | 50 |   | 69 | 59 | 39 | 62   | 68 | 66 | 57    |
| Couple with at least one person 75+ | 23 | 26 | 25 | 27 | 34 | 30 | 38  | 33 |   | 29 | 20 | 32 | 32   | 32 | 30 | 30    |
| 3 or more people+Other | 5  | 0  | 5  | 23 | 38 | 9  | 17  | 17 | .  | 2  | 22 | 29 | 6    | 0  | 4  | 13    |

Source: Eurostat, 2002
In general, the most common household type in old age is still ‘living with a spouse’. This applies particularly to the households of men. However, the chances of living alone increase steadily with age, with the death of a partner being the prime cause. This is especially the case for women. Because women tend to have a greater life expectancy, widowhood is much more common among women than men. This is reinforced by the fact that many women marry men who are older than themselves. Further, the average gender specific pattern is that men are more likely to remarry at old age, whereas women more often stay single after divorce or death of the spouse (Moen, 2001). Overall, the growing number of older people in society is associated with an increasing trend towards one-person households.

A more fundamental change in the household composition has been the decrease since the 1960s of the more ‘traditional’ household type (a stable one-earner family with children). This decrease coincides with a growing complexity in and acceptance of types of family and household formation. This encompasses, for example, an increasing number of one-person households also at young age, dual earners living with or without children, lone-parent families, cohabitation instead of marriage, and families affected by separation and divorce (Champion, 1998; Esping-Andersen, 1999). The meaning of this growing complexity for the way in which children grow up is beyond the scope of this research. However, being a child today typically also means having few or no siblings. From the perspective of older people, this means that the chance to become grandparents or have more than one grandchild has decreased.

However, there are considerable differences between countries in the extent to which other family members play a role in household formation. In Southern Europe (including Italy), despite the low fertility, a significant proportion of older people live with persons other than only their spouse – most likely children or other relatives (Iacovou, 2000). In contrast, in the Scandinavian countries this household type is almost non-existent. Esping-Andersen (1999) links these differences also to the
concept of de-familization. In the social democratic regimes of the Scandinavian countries, the welfare state has largely absorbed family care ‘burdens’, in for example day-care for infants and home-help for the aged. In the familistic regimes, households are themselves principally responsible for their members’ welfare (Esping-Andersen, 1999). As a result, young adults in Southern European countries are much more dependent on the family when they need (economic) support. Hence, many young adults (especially men) continue to live with their parents until after the age of 30. Conversely, older people have to rely much more on the direct support of younger generations.

A final important change, and a key source of heterogeneity, concerns the ethnic composition of Europe’s ageing populations. In all European nations, there is growing diversity in terms of the ethnic and cultural background of its older people (Domberg-De Rooij and Musterd, 2002: 114f.). While some European nations, such as Italy, are associated with the in-migration of people primarily from a European background (see Beller, 1987; Bonifazi, 2001), others have experienced the migration of significant numbers of people from former colonies (for example, the Netherlands and the UK). The historic timing of such patterns of migration has a significant impact on current and future population composition. In some countries, first-generation migrants – those who left their countries of origin in the 1950s and 1960s as young people – are now reaching old age. This is a very diverse group with its own specific needs and related problems, based on their cultural background and their obtained socio-economic position in their ‘host land’ (Blakemore and Boneham, 1994). Nevertheless, in most European countries, the age structure of ethnic minority groups is still somewhat younger than that of the majority ‘white’ populations. However, this is steadily changing, and differences between minority groups persist. For example, in the UK around 7% of the total ethnic minority population was aged 65 and over in 1997-99, compared with around 16% of the population as a whole. Yet some ethnic minority groups are ‘older’ than others; a feature explained by variations in migration history, and also by differences in gender composition and mortality. For example, while 15% of Britain’s black Caribbean population was aged 65 and over in 1997-99, this applied to only 7% of the Pakistani population, and 3% of Black-African people (Office for National Statistics, 2001).

2.6 Summary

On the basis of this analysis of demographic trends in the EU / ESAW countries, a number of initial conclusions can be drawn. These relate, first, to elements of uniformity between European nations and, second, to characteristics that show some degree of variation between these countries.

Unity highlights
- Growing importance of older people in society both in absolute numbers and in proportion.
- Population ageing in Europe is mainly the result of a substantial drop in fertility.
- Fertility has fallen to well below replacement level, increasing the probability of population decline in the long-term.
- Life expectancy is increasing for both men and women; women still significantly outnumber men in the oldest age groups.
- The older population is ageing itself; this will become the main determinant of further population ageing.
• The heterogeneity of the older population is increasing as for example in age itself, ethnicity and household composition.

Diversity highlights
• Despite being a relatively late moderniser, Italy is now the most aged country, mainly because of a very low fertility level.
• Italy can be characterised as a regime with a high focus on familism, which may paradoxically play an important role in the relatively low numbers of births. On the other hand multi-generational households are still quite common.
• Although Sweden sits alongside Italy at the top of the list of most aged countries, in many aspects these countries strongly diverge from one another. Sweden is seen as a forerunner: an early drop in fertility, however nowadays having an intermediate level, a high life expectancy for both women and men, a strong de-familization which enables women to combine family building with a working-career, and an absence of household types in which older people live with other persons than possibly their partner.
• The other countries are in general seen as a heterogeneous ‘Western Europe’ cluster, with both characteristics of familism and de-familization, and a relatively intermediate aged population compared to Sweden and Italy. Luxembourg and the Netherlands are less aged.
• Luxembourg and the Netherlands show a relatively high fertility level. The UK attracts attention because of a relatively low life expectancy, especially for women, whereas Austria shows, for example, remarkable similarities with Italy in relation to household composition.
Part 3. The Geographical Context of Ageing

While Europe’s nations share a common cultural heritage, national differences in the development of fertility and life expectancies provide an early indication of the importance of national differences in socio-economic and cultural dimensions (see Figure 1.2). In particular, the literature introducing the concepts of the First and the Second Demographic Transition has sought to explain the emergence of new demographic patterns with reference to these dimensions (Van de Kaa 1987; Lesthaeghe 1983). Besides explanations of the unique development of certain nations, subsets of nations are described with a comparable demographic development and related to a comparable geographical context. We assume that this geographical context is not only relevant for national demographic development, including the national age structure (dynamics), but also affects the living conditions of older adults (De Jong Gierveld, 2002).

In this section, the relevant contextual differences for adult well-being in Europe will be described with reference to two levels of geography. The first is the national level, and takes the conclusions of demographers as a starting point (Section 3.2). Another possible level of geography to take into consideration could be the regional level, because most EU and ESAW-nations have relevant regional differences. However, diversity at the regional level can be seen as more or less congruent with the degree of national differentiation. The second level of relevant contextual differences to be addressed here concerns the local level and is reflected in variations between urban and rural areas (Section 3.3).

Alongside fertility and mortality, migration represents a significant demographic factor (see Figure 1.2). However, although population mobility at a national level is of growing relevance for older people in Europe, this report will concentrate on migration between and within (metropolitan) regions (Section 3.4).

The relation between culture and *ageing well* is central to this part of the report. For that reason, it is useful to start with some theoretical thoughts regarding the link between culture and *ageing well*.

### 3.1 Culture and the Concept of Ageing Well

‘Ageing well, as opposed to a difficult old age, is a concept that is intended to convey positive images and approaches to ageing’. … ‘The concept emphasizes the idea that people can adapt and maintain satisfying lives as they age even when, for some individuals, the circumstances are less than optimal’ (Hawkins, 2003, paraphrasing Johnson, 1995). The concept seeks to provide a counterbalance to negative images of ageing and the idea that older people only represent a burden to society. The idea of *ageing well* originates in American society (Vaillant, 2002) and displays a number of similarities with the concept of successful ageing (Rowe and Kahn, 1987, 1997; Baltes and Baltes, 1990). Both concepts are based on evidence that rejects one-sided negative opinions about older people. Despite the demographic ageing of our populations, many older people in advanced industrial societies remain in good health and are able to cope with losses that are typical for old age (Deeg, 2002). In these countries, evidence points to an improvement in the income and wealth position of older people (OECD, 2001). Rather than simply placing a burden on their children, older people are increasingly recognised as an important source of financial
help, and as providers of assistance to their children in relation to child care and house keeping, and moral support in difficult periods (like divorce) (Cribier, 1982, 1989, 1990). Although in many studies the concept of successful ageing is dominated by healthy ageing (Deeg, 2002), a variety of definitions, measurement tools and models have been developed (Torres, 1999). According to Torres (1999) these studies, even a number of those that have attempted to research successful ageing in different cultures, tend to lack a theoretical framework that incorporates culture.

The necessity to incorporate culture is not only relevant for theoretical frameworks, but also extends to methods and techniques of social research. For instance, survey techniques and the use of individual questionnaires are strongly connected with the culture of Western societies (Galtung, 1967). Also the use of questionnaires in different languages gives rise to one of the main problems of cross-cultural research, because the meaning of translated concepts is strongly influenced by the linguistic-cultural context (Scharf and Wenger, 2000). In this respect, Hantrais (1996: no page no.) notes that: ‘Language can present a major obstacle to effective international collaboration, since it is not simply a medium for conveying concepts, but part of the conceptual system, reflecting institutions, thought processes, values and ideology, and implying that the approach to a topic and interpretations of it will differ according to the language of expression’.

The necessity to incorporate cultural awareness within European ageing research has been growing in recent decades. Such an awareness facilitates not only an understanding of differences between EU-nations within a supranational framework, but also increasingly an understanding of the specific character of ageing with respect to the growing cultural and ethnic diversity in European countries, as well as an understanding of the growing life-style differentiation of older people (Quality of Life in Old Age, 2002).

Torres (1999) illustrates the importance of culture by describing some conclusions of the Project AGE (conducted in Hong Kong, Philadelphia, Illinois, Ireland and Botswana) (Keith et al., 1994). For example, she found that Americans understood successful ageing primarily to be associated with self-sufficiency and the ability to live alone, while those in Hong Kong viewed their families’ willingness to meet their needs as a sign of successful ageing. Also with respect to one of the dimensions, the ‘personal characteristics’, a major difference was highlighted. Chinese older people referred to how they were viewed by others, while the Americans were concerned with how they viewed the world. A possible explanation for the contrasts is that intergenerational living constitutes the norm in Hong Kong.
In an attempt to develop a culturally relevant model for the study of successful ageing and other ageing-related issues, Torres (1999: 45) presents an adaptation of Kluckhohn’s (1950) theory of value orientations (Figure 3.1).

Central to this model is the concept of value orientations and the five areas of concern discerned. Torres defines a value orientation as ‘a set of propositions embracing both value and existential elements’ (Torres, 1999: 42). The five areas of concern are formulated by Torres (1999: 43, Table 3), following Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961):

- **Human nature**: Whether the innate character of human nature is thought to be predominantly good, evil or a combination of the two.
- **Man-nature**: Whether man wants to surrender to, live in harmony with, or master nature.
- **Relations**: Whether linearity, co laterality, or individuality is the preferred type of relation that man has to others.
- **Time**: Whether a culture orients itself in terms of its past, present or future.
- **Activity**: Whether the modality of a culture is predominantly characteristic of being, being-in-becoming, or doing’.

An addition to the original Kluckhohn model is the layer of foundations, although the Kluckhohns acknowledge the religious system as the foundation of value orientations. Torres argues that it is necessary to use the model in cross-cultural gerontology at all three levels.

Within the ESAW-project, the description of nations or clusters of nations will focus on the intermediate level, the value orientations, and on a general description of selected aspects of the various founding systems. The (statistical) relations found in

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**Figure 3.1** Torres (1999, p. 45) adaptation of Kluckhohn’s theory of value orientations for the study of successful ageing (ageing well)
each of the national ESAW datasets regarding ageing well, can be set against the value orientations characteristic of that nation.

3.2 National Contexts: A Cultural Geography of Europe

Although Europe is increasingly presented as a homogeneous geographical unit, the continent is still marked by a strong cultural diversity of populations with different languages, religions, norms and habits and ethnic backgrounds. The European continent is characterised by many internal cultural boundaries (Figure 3.2).

At a national level, the cultural differentiation in Europe has its main origin in the spheres of influence of religions and religious denominations (Knippenberg, 1995). After an early division between Byzantine Christianity in the East and Latin Christianity in the West, the sphere of influence of Islam had always been of importance for cultural differentiation in Europe (Davies, 1997). Within the Latin Christian sphere the Reformation and Counter-reformation led to another cultural divide. Religion played such an influential role because the peace treaty of Augsburg in 1555 and subsequently that of Westphalia in 1648 led to a situation in which religion tended to become homogeneous within political boundaries. Peace was based on the principle of ‘cuius regio, eius religio’ (who rules the country, his religion hold). Religion was also seen as important for economic behaviour and demographic development.
Before the onset of the Cold War and the emergence of an Iron Curtain between ‘East’ and ‘West’ Europe, one of the important cultural regionalisations in Europe was a division between Western, Central and Eastern Europe. Although the boundaries of these three cultural regions are rather vague, there was less doubt
about the cultural centres. To the centre of Central Europe belonged the urban quadrangle of Berlin, Munich, Budapest and Warsaw. A simpler regionalisation was the division between East and West. In this concept most of Central Europe belonged to East Europe. There was less consensus regarding the cultural boundary between these two Europes. Symbolic boundary rivers like the Elbe and Saale are often mentioned. Also the towns of Lübeck in the North and Trieste in the South were seen as boundary towns.

With the onset of the Cold War, the concept of Central Europe disappeared and the political boundary between East and West became dominant. The most important historical difference between East and West Europe before the post-war division was the absence in East Europe of economically active urban citizens and a much later (at the end of the Nineteenth Century) disappearance of rural feudalism. Apart from that, state and state boundaries were more stable in the West than the East (Longworth, 1992).

The religious cultural borderline between the Roman Catholic church and the Protestant churches represents a further important historic cultural divide in Europe for economic and demographic development (Knippenberg, 1995; Vandersmottten, 2000). While the Protestant part of Europe came to be marked by a growing homogeneity within state boundaries, Roman Catholic Europe tended towards a homogeneity that developed across state boundaries, and could be related to the hierarchical power structure in the Roman Catholic church. The cultural divide between the Roman Catholic church and the Protestant churches had far-reaching consequences for economic development. The relation between the protestant religious system and the value orientations within capitalism as described by Max Weber is one of the most well-known contextual explanations in social science (Granato, Inglehart and Leblang, 1996).

Moving to a description of the six ESAW-nations and the possible subsets of (European) countries they belong to, we first discuss the description of European nations and the clusters of nations presented by Mellens (1999b). Although the selection of characteristics and the clustering was based on an assessment of future demographic development in Europe’s nations (De Beer and Van Wissen, 1999), the differentiation presented is seen as relevant for (recent changes in) behavioural patterns of older adults and is correlated with the religious system (De Jong Gierveld, 2002).
Table 3.1: Some key characteristics of the socio-economic and cultural dimension for EU / ESAW nations

<table>
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<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>10.26</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>25,130</td>
<td>7.0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5.35</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>27,140</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>72.0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>82.19</td>
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<td>27.1</td>
<td>23,540</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>58.8</td>
</tr>
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<td>2.7</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>15,460</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>40.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>39.49</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>18,110</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>59.52</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>22,250</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>56.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
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<td></td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>26,800</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>55.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>57.84</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>22,890</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>43,750</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>50.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>15.98</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>26,310</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>65.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>8.12</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>24,570</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>60.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>10.02</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>16,770</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>61.1</td>
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<td>Finland</td>
<td>5.18</td>
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<td>27.6</td>
<td>23,200</td>
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<td>23,560</td>
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<td>65.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Luxembourg was excluded by Mellens for technical reasons.

Source: Eurostat Yearbook 2002, except Female age at marriage (derived from Mellens (1999a) Table 2.1 (ECE, 1997)

The variables, most presented in an updated version in Table 3.1, belong to two groups: the socio-economic dimension (with economic, education, health and technology components) and the cultural dimension (with sub-dimensions based on the ideas of Inglehart and Hofstede: power distance, conservatism, gender equality, individualism, and post-materialism).

Clustering according to these variables identifies the existence of five clusters of European nations (Mellens, 1999b: 33-37). All fifteen current EU member states belong to the following three clusters:

- The *Maternalistic* cluster includes the Nordic countries (ESAW country Sweden). The word maternalistic refers to the high level of female labour participation, the high level of child care facilities and the fact that female values like cooperation are emphasized. With respect to the socio-economic dimension, these countries are characterised by high per capita GNP, high levels of education and advanced technology. As for the cultural dimension, they show a low level of individualism and conservatism.
• The Pragmatic cluster consists of the western European countries (ESAW countries Austria, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and UK). A main characteristic of these countries is economic wealth, both at macro and micro level. As a result, these countries tend not to obtain extreme scores, especially with respect to gender and conservatism.

• The Paternalistic cluster is comprised of the Mediterranean countries (ESAW country Italy). The term Paternalistic refers to the prevalence of traditional family values, the lack of female emancipation and low level of child care facilities. Consequently, these countries score high on conservatism and low on gender equality.

Beyond the current EU member states two further clusters are discerned: an intermediate cluster dominated by countries of central Europe, that are relatively modern and had a non-communist history between the two world wars; and a post-totalitarian cluster with a large power distance in economic and political terms.

Other social scientists have also sought to identify and describe families of nations in Europe (see Lalenis, De Jong and Mamadouh, 2002: 38-41). Apart from that the cultural diversity of Europe is described for several dimensions (language, religion, etc.) in atlases and geographical handbooks (for instance Unwin, 1998).

Three other studies, by Francis Castles, the Dutch social scientist Geert Hofstede and the French demographer Emmanuel Todd, are relevant for the concept of ageing well, because they explicitly relate to value orientations, which are central to the conceptual framework described in Figure 1.2.

On the basis of his analysis of 21 OECD nations, Castles (1999: 8f.) identifies four family groupings:

• An English-speaking family, bound together by a common language and historical ties to Great Britain that have influenced the development of shared political and legal processes. In relation to the ESAW study, the UK is the only participating nation belonging to this family.

• A Scandinavian family, made up of the Nordic nations that share a common historical and legal development over many centuries, and (with the exception of Finland) similar languages. ESAW nation Sweden belongs to this family.

• A continental Western European family that lacks a common linguistic heritage, but in which a 'historical legacy of dynastic links, cultural (particularly religious) similarities and policy diffusion' has generated some degree of similarity. The ESAW nations of Austria, Italy and the Netherlands are part of this grouping. While Luxembourg is not included in Castles’s analysis, it also belongs to the same family.

• A Southern European family is comprised of three countries: Greece, Portugal and Spain. This family lacks a common history or language, but derives its similarity from a shared cultural (Mediterranean) heritage. These nations also have in common the fact that they were relatively late modernisers, as reflected

2 Although not included in the statistical analysis Luxembourg is mentioned as part of this cluster by Mellens (1999b, Table 3.1)
in a delayed socio-economic and political (democratic) development. No ESAW
nation belongs to this particular family.

Geert Hofstede (1980) has sought to discover national patterns of value orientations
by conducting surveys among IBM employees across the world. His data are
structured according to five dimensions:

1. The power distance index (PDI), related to the acceptance of hierarchical role
differentiation;
2. The uncertainty avoidance index (UAI), related to the urge to avoid uncertainty;
3. Individualism (IDV), confronting individual against collective orientations;
4. Masculinity (MAS), which is supposed to grasp both gender role differentiation in
general and the importance of competition as a masculine value, as opposed to
quality of life which is feminine.
5. Long term orientation (LTO). This dimension emerged later and is based on the
opposition between short- and long-term gratification, between truth and virtue.

Based on the first four dimensions Hofstede (1980, Figure 7.12: 336) groups the
world’s nations into eight clusters, six of which are relevant to the EU-nations:

1. More developed Latin countries with high PDI, high UAI, medium to high IDV,
medium MAS (ESAW-nation Italy, although in parentheses, because Hofstede
adds Italy to this cluster for historical reasons. In the cluster analysis Italy belongs
to the Germanic countries);
2. Less developed Latin countries with high PDI, high UAI, low IDV, low to high
MAS (no ESAW-nation, Portugal);
3. Near Eastern countries with high PDI, high UAI, low IDV, medium MAS (no
ESAW-nation, Greece);
4. Germanic countries with low PDI, medium to high UAI, medium IDV, medium to
high MAS (ESAW-nation Austria);
5. Anglo countries with low to medium PDI, low to medium UAI, high IDV, high MAS
(ESAW-nation UK);
6. Nordic countries with low PDI, low to medium UAI, medium to high IDV, low MAS
(ESAW-nations Sweden and The Netherlands).

Todd (1985) introduces the family structure as a structural variable in explaining
differences in cultural, political and economic development. Family structures
determine basic value orientations. Drawing on the French sociologist Le Play (1806-
1882), he characterises family structures after the French Revolution according to
two basic dimensions: the authority relations between generations (liberty) and the
equality between brothers (equality). In the first dimension, the child who continues
to live with his parents after marriage, forming an extended family group, is
conforming to an authoritarian relation, while the child who leaves his parents after
adolescence, to form an independent family through marriage, conforms to a liberal
relation, with an emphasis on individual independence. In the second dimension, an
egalitarian relation is expressed by a division of parental property, while inequality is
expressed by the indivisibility of the succession and the exclusion of all but one of
the brothers. Family structures are measured through ethnographic data about
cohabitation between generations and inheritance practices. Todd distinguishes four
family types as relevant for countries or regions in countries in the EU (see also Todd, 1987, with respect to the national distribution of the authoritarian family):

1. The absolute nuclear family (liberal and unequal), in ESAW-nations UK (England and Wales) and the Netherlands (most);
2. The egalitarian nuclear family (liberal and equal), in ESAW-nation Italy (the North and South);
3. The stem or authoritarian family (authoritarian and unequal), in ESAW-nations Austria, UK (Scotland), Netherlands (some regions), Sweden;
4. The communitarian family (authoritarian and equal), ESAW-nation Italy (Central).

Table 3.2 offers an overview of the four different approaches to clustering described above. While those of Castles, Mellens and Hofstede operate at a national level, Todd’s typology concentrates on a regional level and reflects his special interest in regional variations, in particular within France.
Table 3.2   Cultural families of European nations / regions compared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Socio-economic and cultural dimensions</th>
<th>National patterns of value orientations</th>
<th>Family structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Continental West European</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
<td>Stemm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Scandinavian</td>
<td>Maternalistic</td>
<td>Absolute nuclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Continental West European</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
<td>Stem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Southern Europe</td>
<td>Paternalistic</td>
<td>Egalitarian nuclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Southern Europe</td>
<td>Paternalistic</td>
<td>Stemm (N)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Continental West European</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
<td>Egalitarian nuclear (central and S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>English speaking</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
<td>Stem family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Continental West European</td>
<td>Paternalistic</td>
<td>Communitarian (C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>Continental West European</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
<td>Stem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Continental West European</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
<td>Absolute nuclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Continental West European</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
<td>Stem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>Southern Europe</td>
<td>Paternalistic</td>
<td>Stemm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Scandinavian</td>
<td>Maternalistic</td>
<td>Communitarian (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Scandinavian</td>
<td>Maternalistic</td>
<td>Stem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>English speaking</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
<td>Absolute nuclear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data presented in Table 3.2 highlight key elements of the cultural diversity that characterises the EU-nations. This diversity is also amply reflected in the six ESAW-nations, with almost all types discerned within the EU also represented in the ESAW-sample. Spain and Portugal and especially Greece belong to types that are not included in the ESAW study. Of the ESAW-nations, Italy and Sweden stand out as having the most specific positions. Though belonging to a Continental West European group in relation to Castles’ analysis, Italy’s location in relation to the three other typologies is unique (paternalistic, more developed Latin, communitarian / egalitarian nuclear family structures). Sweden takes a somewhat different position with a specific maternalistic, Scandinavian profile. ESAW-nations with a relatively comparable profile are the UK and the Netherlands (both pragmatic and with absolute nuclear family structure in the national centre and stem family structure in...
the national periphery). However, these nations diverge in relation to aspects of their public policy making process. While the Netherlands belongs to the Continental West European cluster, the UK is part of the English-speaking ‘family’ of nations (which is also reflected in its location in relation to Hofstede’s analysis of value orientations). Moreover we can conclude that Austria and Luxembourg are relatively most comparable, belonging to the Continental West European family, the pragmatic and stem family clusters, and probably the Germanic cluster (part of Luxembourg).

3.3 Urban / Rural as a Context for Ageing Well

Urbanisation / rurality is widely accepted by the social sciences to be a powerful contextual characteristic, also in social gerontology (for instance De Jong Gierveld and Fokkema, 1998). However, there continues to be a lot of debate about the geographical scale of this context characteristic, the relevance of traditional urban physical morphological characteristics like number of inhabitants and population density (Hoggart, 1990; Bontje, 2001), and the structural and cultural effects of an urban as opposed to a rural context for human well-being of older people in post-industrial societies (Quality of Life in Old Age, 2002). In this report, we examine the difference between urban and rural local environments as contextualised within nations. Differential urbanisation is usually studied within national contexts (Kontuly and Geyer, 2003).

In the ESAW study, the urban/rural context is reflected in a dichotomy of local contexts that reflects more or less the national proportions for the population between 50 and 90. However, the regional component in most of the ESAW-samples can also be interpreted as a level of urbanisation, but at a regional geographical scale.

The degree of urbanisation can be formulated as a set of structural and cultural characteristics relevant for societies at the local level (neighbourhood, settlement) and the regional level (metropolitan region, rural region). Structural characteristics can be seen as a set of potentials for the local or regional society. This includes the socio-economic structure of the local or regional environment, the available facilities and the population characteristics. Cultural characteristics can be seen as a set of norms, values and rules regulating the local and regional society in primary relationships (informal relations in the household and the local community) and secondary relationships (more formal relations). Changes – over time – in relation to these characteristics can loosely be described as modernisation. Spatial differentiation, describing relations between physical-morphological characteristics of contexts (like density of population) and characteristics of the local or regional society, can be seen as degree of urbanisation or rurality.

Although concepts of urbanisation and rurality suggest the possibility of generalisation, they are, also within Europe, nation-specific (Hoggart et al., 1995; Terluin, 2001). They also change over time as a result of cultural developments and in relation to concepts of physical planning (Bontje, 2001; Halfacree, 1995). Indicators and the geographical level (local or regional) used also vary in relation with the topic studied. This generates a certain degree of confusion with, for

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3 The ideas presented here in relation to urbanisation are inspired by Dignum (1997) and Van Engelsdorp Gastelaars (for example 2003).
example, the European Commission using different approaches to such concepts in its strategic papers (Terluin, 2001).

Traditionally, in the former agricultural societies of Europe, structural and cultural conditions were integrated mainly at the local level of the village or market town. Central characteristics of these societies were short distances between home and work, the importance of relations within the settlement for material well-being and service provision, and a relatively heterogeneous population composition with respect to socio-economic position and age. Many local societies were self-contained and social integration was based on economic principles and local culture (Keur and Keur, 1955). Local orientation was strongly emotional and directed towards one’s own village or town and based on local roots: people were born and grew up in the same settlement, and mobility rates were low. Older people in such local milieus lived mostly in multigenerational households or within walking distance of family members, like their children. Related to this stage of societal development are sociological concepts like ‘Gemeinschaft’ (Tönnies), ‘folk society’ (Redfield) and ‘mechanical solidarity’ (Durkheim). These concepts were quite often romanticised in the social policies of Europe’s nations after periods of severe social dislocation (like the two World Wars and the economic crises of the 1930s).

During the Twentieth Century, the shift of national economies from the primary sector towards the secondary sector (industrial society) and a subsequent shift to the tertiary and quaternary sector (post-industrial society) fundamentally transformed the geographical scales of human relations and the territorial orientation of people (Parsons, 1960; Van Engelsdorp Gastelaars and Ostendorf, 1986; Van Engelsdorp Gastelaars, 2001). An important precondition of this shift was an ongoing transport revolution giving way to ‘shrinking’ distances and a general scale enlargement of life, in particular a growing distance between the home and the workplace. Especially the growth of car ownership and mass use of cars changed the socio-spatial organisation of societies.

Societies changed during the Twentieth Century to ‘Gesellschaft’ (Tönnies), ‘urban society’ (Redfield), and ‘organic solidarity’ (Durkheim): social relations appeared to lose their territorial roots and became directed to specific functional social categories. For many social scientists this represented the end of the local community. It also initiated a debate, called the ‘community question’, about the possible disadvantages of this development for primary relations (Thomése, 1998). Only in a small number of studies in the first half of the Twentieth Century were social scientists able to reformulate the relevance of the local context with attention to changes in the wider society (Wirth, 1928; Jahoda et al., 1933).

The relevance of the local context in post-industrial societies for people’s social relations was subsequently reinforced by British sociologists such as Young and Willmott (1957). In geography, the importance of the local context was given a new emphasis by the work of a group based at Lund University who were interested in people’s daily routines and life histories (Hägerstrand, 1970). They stressed the impact of constraints that restrict people in bridging distances and entering territories. As a result, most relations with respect to production (employment) and consumption (using facilities) and with respect to social relations can be found within ‘daily urban systems’. However, for certain groups of people, such relations may
remain relatively restricted to the neighbourhood or village. Those with limited mobility, including some older people, have to cope with constraints. The availability of local facilities and the characteristics of the local population are more relevant to these groups as a set of potentials. With respect to the use of (care) facilities and participation in activities, rural positions are often seen as deprived for older people with mobility problems (Moseley, 1979; Gant and Smith 1984; Thissen, 1992).

In addition to the structural conditions of the local context, local culture is relevant to older people as a set of social rules (Dignum, 1997). The relevance of characteristics of the local context, like population density, population composition and migration mobility formed the focus of several projects examining the social (support) networks of older people in different or specific local contexts (Dignum, 1997; Thomése, 1998; De Jong Gierveld and Fokkema, 1998; Thissen, Wenger and Scharf, 1995). In neighbourhoods in metropolitan regions with economic problems (linked to deindustrialisation), older people with low incomes are confronted with high migration mobility and with a variety of lifestyles, which may result in social segregation and vulnerability to forms of social exclusion (Musterd and Murie, 2002; Scharf et al., 2002).

More recently the relevance of the local context has also developed in a more consumptive way in post-industrial societies. Contrary to the scale enlargement of economic and social relations, cultural and political relations are becoming ever more concentrated within the local residential domain (Van Engelsdorp Gastelaars, 2001). Increasing affluence and a growing orientation on the dwelling raises residents’ consciousness of the physical and social quality of the local residential domain. Safety, living in a beautiful natural and cultural landscape, successful property investment, a possibility to express social status, life-style and identity are important motives to invest money but also time and attention in the local residential domain. In the US this has resulted in the development of so-called ‘defended’ neighbourhoods (Blakeley and Snyder, 1997). Although this development is also relevant in the European context, traditional forms of local social integration in Europe quite often develop into new forms of social integration based on a common interest in the local residential domain. A growing number of older affluent Europeans, however, such as those who migrate on retirement to attractive rural settlements along coasts or to attractive European regions or the Mediterranean (Karn, 1977; Hoggart and Buller, 1995; Williams, King and Warnes, 1997), are settling in American-style gated communities a large distance away from their roots.

Besides changes in the meaning of urbanisation at a local level, urbanisation was of growing relevance at a regional level in the second half of the Twentieth Century. Metropolitan regions and relatively rural regions in Europe differ in the first place for their inhabitants in the possibilities to acquire an income. Differences in the number and availability of jobs, the differentiation of the labour market and educational possibilities correlate with density and distance from national economic centres. These characteristics will also influence the material well-being of older inhabitants. Because of age-selective migration between urban and rural regions, related to life-cycle and social mobility in post-industrial societies (Fielding, 1989), rural regions tend to have a mixed population of older inhabitants. On the one hand, local older people with a low educational level tend to stay, while young socially mobile groups tend to migrate to metropolitan regions to start a career. On the other hand, older
people at the end of their labour and housing career tend to migrate to those rural regions that offer an ‘idyllic’ rural residential environment. These kinds of selective migration flows result in attractive rural areas with a weak economic position, and a relatively strong degree of polarisation between local poor older people and non-local wealthy older people. This polarisation is reflected in certain rural regions in a segregation at the settlement level (Thissen, 1995), although also more dispersed patterns of rural poor are mentioned (Cloke, 1997).

Table 3.3 and Figure 3.3 present some data that describe the degree of urbanisation and indicate the degree of regionalisation for the EU- and ESAW-countries. The figures presented illustrate the reasoning in this section about urbanisation and rurality as a context characteristic. Although the figures are also influenced by differences in size, economic development and settlement pattern of the countries, they describe important contextual differences between the nations.

### Table 3.3 Indicators of urbanisation / rurality and some indicators of regionalisation in EU / ESAW countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Population density</th>
<th>Share of population in urban / rural areas (%)</th>
<th>Economic shift</th>
<th>Mobility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional scale:</td>
<td>Urban, Local scale</td>
<td>Primary sector (%)</td>
<td>Secondary sector (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Share of population in rural / urban areas**
- **Car use**: Mean number of car km / person and year (1998), Panorama of transport, Eurostat.
Compared to the other nations the Netherlands and UK belong to the very urbanised countries, while Austria belongs more to the group of relatively rural countries.
Sweden and Italy occupy a more intermediate position (see Bonifazi and Heins, 2001). However, at a local level, Sweden belongs to the very urbanised countries.

The indicators of regionalisation for the ESAW-nations show that the national economies of the ESAW-countries are highly developed. The relatively agricultural societies in the EU (like Greece) are not represented in ESAW. In general the ESAW-countries can be characterised as post-industrial societies, with Austria, Italy and Luxembourg as countries with still an important secondary sector and Italy and Austria even with a relatively important primary sector.

The relatively high mobility figures for Italy and Luxembourg can be seen as indicators of the importance of regionalisation in these countries. The low mobility figures for the Netherlands compared with the economic shift can be seen as an indication of a relatively compact urbanisation due to strict physical planning. The relatively high mobility figures in the UK and Sweden combined with the clear economic shift reflects the importance of the regional level for daily activities in these countries.

Figure 3.3 shows that urbanisation at both regional and local levels is more or less related to population density for the EU-countries. However, urbanisation at a local level and urbanisation at a regional level are relatively independent. Especially the Scandinavian countries of Denmark and Sweden show a rural character at a regional level and an urban character at a local level. The high figures for regionalisation of these countries indicate that even the population in rural regions will have urban centres in their daily systems.

3.4 Migration and an Ageing Population

In this report migration is defined as one of the demographic components that is also affected by socio-economic and cultural dimensions but is more than the other components responsible for differential age structures at different geographical levels. Especially differences in age structure between regions and settlements are often related to age-selective migration. However, migration is growing in importance for the age structure dynamics of Europe’s nations as well.

Another important aspect of migration, also described in the conceptual framework (Figure 1.2), is the direct influence of migration on – local, regional, and national – socio-economic and cultural dimensions. For instance, selective out-migration of youngsters in rural regions with a peripheral position with respect to national economic centres is for more than one century not only the main background of a relatively older population in those regions, but influenced also the socio-economic and cultural dimensions of regional and local rural contexts in many parts of Europe. Selective out-migration quite often ‘ruralised’ these regions and settlements (Clout, 1972), making relatively traditional characteristics more dominant. Another example of the impact of migration is the selective out-migration of youngsters in the former GDR. Such migration changed the context for older inhabitants in this part of Germany, although changes in value orientations associated with the ‘Wende’ were maybe of more importance than the out-migration of children (Scharf, 1997).

In a comparable way, but at a local geographical level, age-selective migration within urban daily systems affects firstly the age profile of settlements or neighbourhoods...
within the metropolitan region and secondly contributes to specific local milieus that are structurally or culturally more or just less attractive for older residents (Bonaguidi and Abrami, 1992; Rees, 1992).

Also the growing migration of wealthy older inhabitants of countries in the North of Europe towards the countryside of France and to the Mediterranean will affect the socio-economic and cultural dimensions of national contexts involved. However, because these migration streams are strongly concentrated on certain regions and settlements within the national territory, the effect is mainly focused on these regions and settlements, for instance regions along coasts, with an attractive landscape and climate and with available housing (Williams, King and Warnes, 1997).

In general, migration of people on retirement is only somewhat higher than for nearby age groups (Warnes, 1992). Many older people are inclined to stay within the house where they have spent most of their life, and within their own community. Migration and the choice of a neighbourhood or settlement by young elders is often primarily related to climate and the quality of the residential environment (scenery, rurality) (Hoggart and Buller 1995). Distances to (specific) facilities and to people belonging to the social network seem less important. However, information about the migration destination also appears to be an important factor. This is reflected in the fact that a significant share of retirement migrants moves to their place or region of birth (Cribier, 1982), or the fact that many retirement migrants settle in places where they have previously spent their holidays or have already purchased a second home. International retirement migration is difficult to define and comparable statistics about the phenomenon in EU-countries are lacking (Williams, King and Warnes, 1997). Figure 3.4 indicates the most important destinations of international retirement migration in the EU-countries.
Intra-national migration patterns of older people in post-industrial societies can be related to changes in urbanisation patterns (Frey, 1992; Golant, 1992). For instance the migration of older households can be described as part of an 'escalator' system where youngsters move to central urban areas because of social mobility (education and starting a career in the labour market) and households with children are moving to nearby suburban locations while households later in the life-cycle move to suburban and rural locations at some distance from urban centres (Fielding, 1989). A part of the migration of older households on retirement from urban to suburban settings can be seen as postponed suburbanisation (Cribier, 1982). International retirement migration and changes in urbanisation patterns in Europe and the related migration patterns of older people and other age groups are also relevant to well-being of older people. Retirement migration into relatively isolated rural settlements.
can be a source of problems (Hoggart and Buller, 1995). The migration of children to suburban areas or new towns changed distances to them and affected social networks of older people (Cribier, 1990).

Apart from the migration stream of wealthy retirement migrants from the north of Europe to France and the Mediterranean, another migration stream at the national level is becoming relevant to the geography of ageing in Europe. The in-migration stream of non-Europeans will grow in importance for the cultural diversity of older people within the coming decades in Europe. This regards especially those people coming from developing countries (from former colonies, asylum seekers etc.). They are concentrated in the main metropolitan centres in Europe and are vulnerable to social segregation and social exclusion (Phillipson et al., 2000; Scharf et al., 2002). The proportion of ethnic older people is growing in many urban neighbourhoods in metropolitan areas of Europe and will necessitate the paying of more attention to the cultural dimension of ageing.

3.5 Summary
Discussion of the geographical context of ageing reinforces the necessity of incorporating an understanding of culture within approaches to models of ageing well. This is a key message arising from the analysis of researchers such as Torres (1999) who argue that concepts such as ageing well need to consider variations in value orientations and political, economic and religious systems as foundations for understanding adult well-being. Such an approach is especially relevant within the European context, where cultural diversity remains strong despite the influence of socio-economic processes that tend to promote homogeneity. Indeed, such diversity has been a remarkably persistent feature of European society. Despite the upheavals associated with socio-economic modernisation and military conflict, Europe’s geographical and cultural boundaries have remained fairly stable over a long period. Elements of cultural diversity are clearly evident in relation to the different clusters to which EU and ESAW countries belong (Table 3.2). Analysis of national approaches to public policy, socio-economic and cultural dimensions, value orientations and family structures suggests the persisting relevance of the nation as a context for ageing well. While there are clear similarities between groups of nations in relation to particular domains, no two nations are identical across all domains. The importance of diversity at a national level is further emphasised by an examination of the regional context, discussed here in terms of urban and rural dimensions, and by an analysis of the differential impact of migration patterns on European regions.
Part 4. Overview of Political and Social Policy Systems

Within the context of the conceptual framework that underpins this report (see Figure 1.2), this section focuses on relevant characteristics of the political and social policy systems of European Union nations. According to the framework, policy systems can contribute to an understanding of national population dynamics in the sense that they also influence the development of national age structures. However, to be effective ‘a policy needs to be rooted in the cultural value system of the population and should be in line with economic processes’ (Mellens, 1999a: 6). A better understanding of national differences in ageing well therefore requires a more explicit description of the relevant national political and social policy contexts. In general terms, the existence of a stable, democratic political structure and the availability of social protection for all citizens can be judged to represent important contextual elements of well-being. Discussion of these contexts necessarily displays some overlap with an analysis of the cultural and socio-economic dimensions. The discussion begins with an overview of political structures in European nations (Section 4.1), before moving on to an analysis of social policy systems (Section 4.2). As in previous sections, a particular focus is placed upon the situation in the six ESAW nations.

4.1 The Political Structure of ESAW Nations

One of the defining characteristics of the EU nations is their fundamental commitment to democratic principles. The key elements of democratic governance include a commitment to the rule of law, the provision of universal suffrage, rights to exercise freedom of speech and association, and the ability of elected parliaments to exercise control over those in government. Yet while all EU nations, including those of the ESAW countries, share the characteristics of democratic government, they vary often considerably in the way in which the political process is structured. Such variations have their roots in the distinctive historical development of Europe’s nations. In this respect, Rose (1996: 59) identifies four different paths to democracy in Europe based upon the speed of change (gradual or abrupt) and the pressure to change (internal or external). In most Western European countries, democracy resulted from a gradual process of change that occurred within a nation. This evolutionary group includes the ESAW countries of the UK, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden. For two further ESAW participating nations change came about in a more abrupt manner, and under the influence of external pressures. Both Austria and Italy developed into democracies following their defeat and occupation in the Second World War. No ESAW countries are represented in the remaining groups, where change came about abruptly through internal pressures (e.g. France or Spain), or where it occurred gradually as a result of external influence (Ireland). The implication of such different routes to democracy is that the political institutions and structures in the ‘evolutionary’ group developed over time, often in a piecemeal and fragmented manner. For those countries that experienced defeat and occupation, the post-war political development occurred initially under the close scrutiny of external powers (Rose, 1996: 60).

In comparative political science research, attention focuses on three key types of political institutions that are important components of democratic states: executive-legislative arrangements, the electoral system, and the political party system (Landman, 2000: 174f.).
The relationship between the executive and the legislature lies at the heart of the democratic process, influencing, for example, the way in which public policy comes to be enacted. In principle, three sets of executive-legislative arrangements can exist (Landman, 2000): a purely presidential form, a purely parliamentary form, and a mixed system. The pure forms of government differ in relation to the degree of independence assigned to the respective political institutions. For example, in a pure parliamentary system, a prime minister is dependent on maintaining the support of a majority of elected parliamentary representatives. By contrast, in a pure presidential system, an element of independence is guaranteed to both the executive and the legislature through a system of separate elections. In the ESAW countries, the pure parliamentary system predominates. Italy, the Netherlands, the UK and Sweden all have executive-legislative arrangements characterised by the mutual interdependence of the respective institutions, by a dependence of the executive on the support of a parliamentary majority, and a simultaneous election of the executive and legislature. An additional element of the institutional make-up is the separation of powers in some countries between central and regional levels of government (Keating, 2002). In the ESAW nations, Austria stands out as having the most developed form of federal structure – introduced in the post-war settlement as a means of inhibiting the re-emergence of a strong central government of the type established under National Socialism. While other nations pay increasing attention to the development of forms of regional governance (for example Italy and the UK), some operate as centralised systems, albeit with strong elements of local democratic control (Sweden).

In relation to electoral systems, there are again three broad approaches that can be adopted. Elections can be contested using a majoritarian (or first-past-the-post) system, a proportional system or some mixture of the two. Proportional systems guarantee parliamentary representation in accordance with the distribution of the popular vote. Such systems (albeit with a range of different technical rules) exist in the ESAW nations of Austria, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden. Elections to the lower chamber of the UK parliament are conducted on the basis of a simple first-past-the-post system.

The structure of national party systems is in turn closely related to the electoral system, with the electoral system determining the degree to which particular political parties can secure access to positions of parliamentary authority. While proportional electoral systems tend to produce party systems with a relatively large number of political parties, majoritarian systems are associated with a smaller number of parties. Explaining the nature and development of national party systems has been the subject of comparative political science enquiry for many years. Especially influential in this regard has been the work of Lipset and Rokkan (1967) in relation to the impact of socio-political cleavages. Basing their analysis on the development of European party systems, they identified four major cleavages as potential and enduring sources of political conflict between social groups that in turn influence the structure of the party system (Webb, 2002: 117f.):

- a *centre-periphery cleavage*, often associated with the formation of the nation state. The extent to which such a cleavage persists is linked to the relative success of the nation state in incorporating the interests of social groups who are distinct in relation to their ethnic, linguistic or religious identity.
• a church-state cleavage, again often tied in to the development of nation states. This derives from the degree to which countries could accommodate the distinct interests of the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches, or achieve a balance between secular and non-secular interests.
• a worker-owner cleavage that broadly reflects the degree of conflict between the owners of capital and the means of production on the one hand and employees or workers in the industrial economy on the other.
• an urban-rural cleavage, reflected in the degree to which competition existed between the interests of agriculture and those of industrial production.

The relative importance of these cleavages varies significantly between nations according to their cultural, historical and socio-economic development, and accounts for the different types of political party that are represented in national parliaments. However, one of the key points to emerge from Lipset and Rokkan’s (1967: 54) original analysis was that these cleavages were of such enduring significance that Europe’s party systems in the 1960s showed remarkable similarities with those that emerged in the period between the two world wars.

Since the 1970s, while not negating the thrust of Lipset and Rokkan’s (1967) argument, other political scientists have drawn attention to the way in which European party systems have become increasingly prone to change. Flanagan and Dalton (1984) describe the twin processes that have introduced a greater degree of instability into party systems in terms of realignment and dealignment. While the former process refers to the reorientation of political actors around newly emerging cleavages, the latter implies a dwindling degree of conflict associated with traditional socio-political cleavages. Realignment is evident in the emergence of new cleavages or the re-emergence of old ones. The restructuring of party systems to accommodate a conflict between materialist and so-called post-materialist value orientations (the ‘Silent Revolution’ identified in the work of Ronald Inglehart, 1977) represents a new type of cleavage and is reflected in many countries in the political consolidation of ecological parties. Other countries have witnessed a re-emergence in recent years of the centre-periphery cleavage (for example in the UK with the growing weight of regional nationalist parties, and in Italy with the development of the Northern League). Evidence of a process of dealignment is to be found across European nations in the dwindling share of the vote secured by parties that represent the traditional cleavage structure (Franklin et al., 1992). This is backed up by data that show a loosening of voters’ ties with established political parties and a general decrease in electoral turnout (Broughton, 2002; Webb, 2002: 124).

One outcome of the declining salience of traditional cleavages has, in some European countries, been an increasing fragmentation and polarisation of the party system (Webb, 2002). Fragmentation is noticeable in countries where over the past decades there has been an increasing number of parties represented in parliament (including Austria, Italy and Sweden; but not the Netherlands or the UK), or increasing recourse to minority government (notably in Austria and Sweden). Polarisation suggests a growing ideological divide between political parties, as reflected in their electoral programmes. According to a recent study, which takes account of the ideological views and relative electoral strengths of parties within national polities between the 1950s and 1980s, signs of a growing polarisation in countries such as Italy and Sweden contrast with a reduced degree of polarisation in
Austria, the Netherlands and the UK (Caul and Grey, 2000). Such studies are vulnerable to short-term political shifts, with both Austria and the Netherlands witnessing major and, in part, unpredictable, political upheavals in recent years.

Despite the processes of realignment and dealignment and related signs of political polarisation and fragmentation, Webb (2002) argues that (west) European democracies are still largely characterised by moderate forms of multi-party democracy. This applies most clearly to ESAW countries such as Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden. Italy is regarded as being in a transitional state. Yet with the breakdown of the traditional conflict between Christian Democracy and communism, there are grounds for suggesting that political polarisation has reduced in recent years. Austria, once classified as a two-party system, has also moved towards a multi-party system. Here, however, with the emergence of the right-wing Freedom Party and a strong green party there are concerns about the degree to which the party system has become much more polarised. The other longstanding two-party system is found in the UK, where the electoral system effectively limits the development of a multi-party democracy. That said, the stabilisation of regional parties, and the consolidation in recent years of the Liberal Democrats, suggests that the traditional two-party structure is prone to some degree of change.

4.2 The Social Policy System

Analysis of the social policy systems that provide an important institutional context for ageing well is to be addressed in a series of steps. In order to show similarities and differences between EU / ESAW nations, it is necessary to begin with an historical overview of the emergence of welfare states (Section 4.2.1). This leads into a discussion of approaches to the clustering of European nations in relation to their social policy systems (Section 4.2.2). We then examine key aspects of social policy that relate to the situation and needs of older people. Given that it would not be possible to address in detail all social policies relevant to older people, discussion is limited to those elements judged to be of significance to the concept of ageing well. This involves discussion of public pension systems (Section 4.2.3), the related theme of income adequacy and poverty in later life (Section 4.2.4), and the health and social care systems (Sections 4.2.5 and 4.2.6). While the focus in this section is primarily upon the way in which social policies seek to provide benefits to all citizens, such an approach tends to deflect attention away from the inequalities which mark Europe’s welfare states. This question is the focus of an analysis of social divisions of European welfare (Section 4.2.7).

4.2.1 Historical Perspectives

In most European nations, the origins of social security systems are to be found in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries. During this time, basic laws were passed that sought to provide a basic level of protection against the key social risks associated with (industrial) accident, illness, old age and invalidity (Figure 4.1). Schmidt (1988) notes a certain regularity with which welfare policies were adopted. Policies to address the risk of industrial accidents were generally introduced ahead of systems to insure against loss of employment income related to old age, illness and invalidity. Schemes designed to provide income at times of unemployment were generally adopted much later. Schmidt (1988) argues that this pattern reflects the degree to which social policies represent a break with traditions of economic and political liberalism in the industrialising Europe of the late Nineteenth and early
Twentieth Centuries. Accident insurance schemes were introduced first, since they represented the least significant break with liberal economic traditions, reflecting traditional views about the need for individuals to assume responsibility for their actions. However, unemployment insurance schemes faced greater obstacles since the degree of state intervention into the labour market necessitated by such policies challenged key principles of free-market liberalism.
### Figure 4.1: Introduction of social security systems in Europe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Accident insurance</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Health insurance</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Old age insurance</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Unemployment insurance</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Overall ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>1887</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1888</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>1971 (1903)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1944 (1894)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1924 (1900)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1944 (1920)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1884 (1871)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1889</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1916 (1898)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1933 (1892)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1921/22 (1891)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>1895 (1898)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1946 (1898)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1930 (1898)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1966 (1897)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1911</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1960 (1908)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1898</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1928 (1886)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1919 (1898)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>1902 (1886)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1911</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1913</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1916</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1913</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>1916</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>1946 (1898)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1911 (1908)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Without brackets: Compulsory insurance laws; with brackets: subsidised voluntary insurance schemes.  
Source: Schmidt (1988: 118)
For the purpose of this report it is also useful to consider why some nations introduced their social security schemes ahead of other nations. In terms of the ESAW project, Figure 4.1 shows Austria and Italy to be amongst the first nations to introduce social security systems, while Sweden could be perceived as a relative late-comer. The fact that Austria and Italy (along with Germany) were the pioneers in developing compulsory social insurance schemes points to the absence of a clear link between the development of social policy and the process of industrialisation. These nations industrialised rather later than Britain or France yet introduced the key components of their social policy systems ahead of these countries.

Theories of modernisation, which link the emergence of welfare states directly to general developments in industrialising societies (including urbanisation, industrialisation and increasing national wealth) are useful to the extent that they identify similarities between nations (Kennett, 2001). However, they represent an inadequate means of explaining national differences in the development of social policies (Skocpol and Amenta, 1986). Whilst acknowledging important elements of the modernisation thesis, Hill (1996) places more emphasis on the complex interplay of a range of factors in explaining the historical development of national welfare systems:

- **Concerns about the danger to society of disadvantaged groups** represent a feature of social policy in all nations. However, nations vary in terms of the extent to which particular groups might represent a risk at particular points in time. For example, fear of potential unrest caused by able-bodied unemployed men was especially pronounced across Europe after the Russian revolution and at the end of the First World War. In this respect, social policy measures can be perceived as a means of controlling behaviour that might threaten the state’s stability. Along similar lines, fear of health risks linked to infectious diseases and mental health problems resulted in many nations in the development of isolation hospitals.

- **Concerns about national weakness** could be interpreted as a reason for developing systems of health care. At a time when Europe’s borders were contested and nations sought to express their strength militarily, decent health care – especially for children and women of child-bearing age – was seen as a way of guaranteeing the natural regeneration of the population. During periods of war it was also important to maintain the fitness of the male population. More recently the emphasis has shifted to the need to develop knowledge-based economies based on improved provision of education and training.

- **Demands for egalitarian policies and concerns to achieve the political incorporation of emergent working-class voters** play a key role in the development of comparative social policy research (discussed below). In this respect, social policy can be interpreted as the state’s attempt to buy-off the politically motivated working class movement by providing income at times of labour market inactivity. In democratic systems, once a basic level of social security has been provided, political parties have historically sought to secure electoral advantage by supporting policies that seek to extend the social rights of employees.

- **Social policy development also reflects concerns about the need to regulate market activities.** In the absence of state intervention, it is likely that an
unbridled free market would generate a range of problems that might potentially limit the state’s economic competitiveness. For example, left to its own devices, the free market might not provide a sufficiently broad education to all. Equally, monopolistic provision of health care might mean that some people have no or only limited access to good health.

- Once established, national welfare states generate their own momentum in terms of the development of social policies. In this respect, welfare professionals and bureaucrats act as advocates of (further) state involvement. In order to protect their professions or to secure better terms of employment, groups such as doctors, teachers, and police officers will seek to influence the political process.

- Altruism can also play an important role in determining the development of social policy. On its own, altruism doesn’t explain emergence of welfare states. However, the role of charitable organisations or key individuals as advocates of social action should not be ignored. Such actors can represent the social conscience of a nation, or help to identify a range of social problems that demand state intervention.

Such an analysis of the reasons why states introduce social policies is important in the context of comparative studies of social phenomena. While it can be argued that there are similarities between nations in relation to the state’s involvement in social policy, and that such involvement is universal, it is evident that nations also differ. The development of social policy in particular is prone to the influence of a complex range of factors that vary from policy to policy and country to country across time periods. In the context of a study such as ESAW it is also important to note that these factors are as relevant today as they have been in the past, and help to explain why the state continues to intervene in the field of social policy.

4.2.2 Social Policy: Welfare Regime Models

Despite variation in factors that underlie their development, it is nevertheless evident that there are a number of basic similarities between European nations’ welfare systems. Indeed, some researchers would argue that there is a European welfare model, and that European society and culture is at least in part defined by welfare systems that provide security for all citizens against a range of basic risks. This is judged to set Europe apart from other regions of the world.

Recognition of the basic fact that all European nations have highly developed welfare states has given rise to a wealth of comparative studies (discussed in Clasen, 1999; Hill, 1996; Kennett, 2001). Such studies aim to compare nations and social policies at different levels. Firstly, there are studies which seek to compare welfare states as a whole – either as large or even small groups of nations. Secondly, there are studies which seek to compare individual policy areas between nations. Finally, a number of comparative studies seek to examine what welfare states provide for particular social groups (women, ethnic minorities, young people, older people, families etc.).

An initial route into the comparative study of welfare states draws upon the analysis of a range of publicly available statistical data (e.g. Wilensky, 1975). For example, a number of studies compare nations on the basis of the proportion of national wealth expended on social protection systems (Table 4.1). However, such comparisons are
prone to a variety of difficulties. Issues arise concerning the degree of comparability of the data used and the extent to which the information addresses welfare costs associated with regional and local levels of government (in federal systems). Despite such problems, this type of analysis also has its uses. First, the data emphasise the absence of a clear connection between income per head and public expenditure. While the relatively poor European nations (Greece, Portugal and Spain) tend to spend less on social protection systems, the richer nations are spread fairly evenly across the table. For example, Luxembourg as the wealthiest ESAW-nation in terms of per capita GDP, spends a lower proportion of its national wealth on social protection schemes than the other five ESAW-nations. Second, with regard to the geographical distribution of countries, it tends to be the nations of northern Europe that consistently spend more on social welfare than others. It is the recognition of such facts that first led social scientists to seek out explanations for similarities and differences in the development and structure of welfare states.

Table 4.1  Public social expenditure as a percentage of GDP, EU / ESAW countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: OECD and Eurostat

Some early explanations of differences in social spending (and the structure of welfare states) focused on the role played by different political traditions in European nations. Here it was especially the influence of ‘left’ politics that was perceived as important. The development and refinement of the welfare state could be regarded historically as a key feature of the programme of left-wing parties, and in turn an influence on the programmes of other parties. According to such an analysis, there is potentially a link between the degree of electoral support given to left-wing parties and the level of social policy expenditure. While this approach has merits in explaining the historically high levels of expenditure in the Nordic nations, and the
relatively low levels of spending in the Anglo-Saxon nations, there are too many anomalous cases to sustain the model. For example, until the beginning of the 1990s, the Netherlands maintained a relatively high level of social spending (equivalent to that of the Nordic countries), yet lacked a consistently strong social democratic presence in government. Equally, the politics of countries such as Austria and Belgium have been characterised by complex political compromises between sectional parties that do not reflect a simple split between left-wing and right-wing political forces.

A more enduring means of comparing national welfare states has arisen from the work of Esping-Andersen (1990). In seeking to develop a more meaningful basis for comparison, Esping-Andersen focused less on how much money is spent on welfare, and rather more on how it is spent. Drawing on the notion of decommodification (reflecting ‘the degree to which individuals, or families, can uphold a socially acceptable standard of living independently of market participation’ p. 37), his analysis of social security programmes in 18 OECD nations led to the identification of three distinct types of welfare state regimes:

- The ‘liberal’ welfare regime type, incorporating the European nations of Britain and Ireland, displays low levels of decommodification. Its social policy is characterised by a dominance of means-tested assistance, modest universal transfers, and relatively underdeveloped social insurance schemes.
- The ‘conservative’ regime with a strong corporatist dimension is to be found in nations such as Germany, Austria, Italy and the Netherlands. Under this system, state social policy seeks to maintain existing status differentials between social groups by attaching welfare benefits to the individual’s participation in the labour market rather than to citizenship.
- The ‘social-democratic’ welfare regime type incorporates the Nordic nations. This regime type is associated with the provision of universalistic programmes that provide benefits to all citizens regardless of their relationship to the labour market. High levels of decommodification are based on the need to maintain adequate resources, and are represented in a commitment to attain full-employment.

Esping-Andersen’s analysis represented a turning point in comparative social policy discussions, acting as an important staging post for further debate. Its basic premise is also borne out by Castles (1999: 319) who adopts a different analytic approach, yet generates similar ‘families of nations’ in relation to their welfare state development. In particular the idea of welfare regimes encouraged other researchers to develop alternative models. In this context, Leibfried’s (1993) four-fold typology of welfare systems in Europe has been widely used as a means of addressing similarities and differences between nations:

- Bismarckian – in which welfare protection is linked to participation in the labour market and social security protection preserves income levels for (past) workers. Such welfare systems expect the family and other informal and voluntary sector organisations to provide protection for ‘uninsured’ people. Generally these systems provide health and education to all. All six founding members of the EEC belong to this category (includes ESAW nations Austria, Netherlands, Italy and Luxembourg).
• Anglo-Saxon – based on the Beveridge model of equal insurance protection for all, together with universal provision for education and health. However, state benefit protection is often only available after a strict test of availability for work within the private labour market. The system is characterised by extensive use of means-tested provision, because of inadequate coverage of insurance protection, and to encourage the development of private welfare provision. This model applies to the UK and its English-speaking former colonies (includes ESAW nation UK).

• Scandinavian – characterised by a dominance of the state sector. These are Europe’s most comprehensive welfare states and are based on principles of universalism – i.e. state benefits and services go by right to all citizens. The state itself acts as a major employer committed to maintaining full employment. The result of these principles is a high level of social welfare expenditure (includes ESAW nation Sweden).

• Latin rim – this represented a new category of welfare regime, characterised by low levels of social spending and high levels of poverty and deprivation. State welfare protection was regarded as relatively rudimentary, with agriculture still a key economic factor. With undeveloped labour-market-based protection and limited universal state provision, countries in this category display a reliance upon informal and voluntary sector provision, in particular through the organised church (no ESAW nation).

There are important criticisms of the type of analysis undertaken by Esping-Andersen and Leibfried (notably Baldwin, 1996). These relate first to the nature of the welfare policies considered in developing typologies of welfare regimes. In concentrating on income maintenance policies (pensions, sickness benefits, unemployment benefits) other forms of welfare provision are judged to receive rather limited attention (e.g. health and social care, education, family policies). A rather different typology might arise when such types of welfare are taken into consideration. A second type of criticism has been levelled by feminist researchers, who argue that existing typologies inadequately reflect the gendered nature of social policy (Kennett, 2001; Langan and Ostner, 1991; Lewis, 1992; Sainsbury, 1996). Similarly, other social divisions of welfare – including ethnicity, health status and disability – are often ignored in devising regime typologies (see Section 4.2.7). Third, typologies tend to become rather static. They do not adapt well to shifts in social policy over time. This can be demonstrated most clearly with reference to the Latin Rim nations of Spain and Portugal, which have experienced considerable social policy change since joining the EU in the mid-1980s. However, other nations have also witnessed changes in social policy that suggest a movement from one regime type to another. Finally, Goodin et al. (1999) make the necessary, if somewhat obvious, point that there is a big difference between what welfare states offer in principle and what they provide in practice. Essentially, their argument is that liberal welfare states fail to meet their objective of alleviating poverty, and that corporatist welfare states are not that successful in minimising income instability. On all indicators, Goodin et al. (1999) are of the opinion that the social democratic welfare regime is ‘the best on offer’.

Despite such criticisms, welfare regimes offer a useful means of making broad comparisons between nations in relation to social policy programmes. They facilitate the understanding of differences between nations in terms of the major social
security systems, including pensions and unemployment schemes. For the purposes of cross-national comparative research, such as the ESAW project, the notion of welfare regimes can potentially help to explain differences in the outcome variable ageing well.

4.2.3 Income Maintenance: Public Pension Systems
In general, the major component of older people’s income in European nations is comprised of statutory public pensions and related state benefits. The material security offered through such provisions can be judged to have an important impact on the well-being not only of older people, but also those likely to retire in the future. In response to the ongoing demographic changes, as well as economic imperatives, all European public pension systems have been subject to reform in recent years. In most countries, further reforms are currently being introduced or are planned for the years ahead. In general, the aim of such measures has been to adapt welfare systems to the actual and anticipated ‘financial burden of old age’ by cutting back on pension entitlements and benefits. Such ‘burdens’ arise as a result of the profound demographic changes outlined in Section 2 above and a restructuring of the labour market (trend towards early retirement and flexibilisation of labour markets). At first view, pension systems funded through an ‘intergenerational contract’ appear to rest on increasingly shaky foundations (Phillipson, 1996).

Across Europe, savings in pension systems have been pursued with varying degrees of intensity (Taylor-Gooby, 1999). The degree to which individual nations have been able to reform public pension provision is itself in great part determined by the structure and characteristics of the welfare regime to which it belongs. Thus considerable change in the British pension system, especially since 1980 (Phillipson, 1998), contrasts with less radical reforms in pension arrangements in countries such as Germany and France (see Scharf, 1998 for a discussion of the situation in Germany).

In general, all European employees belong to some form of compulsory pension scheme (different arrangements apply for self-employed workers). Old age is thus perceived as a social risk that needs to be addressed by society as a whole rather than by the individual alone. Typically, pension systems require contributions to be paid by employees, their employers and the state (the ‘universal’ Danish system is an exception, being primarily funded through central taxation). However, there is substantial variation in the scale of contributions and the value of pensions ultimately paid out under different systems (see Figure 4.2 for ESAW nations). Under the Bismarckian regime (typified here by Austria and Luxembourg), relatively high pensions result from a higher level of contributions to the pension insurance system. In the Scandinavian system (in this case, Sweden and to a certain extent the Netherlands) there is an attempt to provide pension benefits as a right to all citizens based on a residence requirement. The level of statutory pensions is the same for all citizens, with some employees in Sweden benefiting from additional benefits paid out under the supplementary scheme. In the Anglo-Saxon welfare regime (represented here by the UK) relatively low contributions to a general national insurance scheme that underpins all social security benefits result in a low level of basic state pension.

A pension reform, with effect from the start of 2003, has altered the structure of the Swedish pension system, and represents a shift from the system presented in Figure 4.2 (see BMGS, 2003). The background to the pension reform is outlined in Anderson (2001).
Under such a system, the market (in the form of alternative pension types, and private savings or investments) offers the main means of avoiding poverty in old age.

Against the background of such diversity, it can be argued that it is much easier to introduce fundamental pension reforms in nations where the principle of social insurance is under-developed, than in those countries where individual employees build up entitlements to pension benefits through their (often lengthy) record of contributions to public pension systems. In this respect, pension reform in countries such as Austria and Italy has proved particularly difficult in recent years. By contrast, the residual nature of provision in the UK has encouraged policy-makers to enact significant reforms in the past two decades that amount to a hollowing out of (the already limited) state pension provision.
Figure 4.2: Retirement pensions: ESAW nations in comparison, 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pension system</th>
<th>Great Britain</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Luxembourg</th>
<th>Netherlands</th>
<th>Austria</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>Based on N.I. system</td>
<td>10% (depending on income)</td>
<td>8.89% of gross earnings</td>
<td>8% of gross earnings</td>
<td>17.9% of income</td>
<td>10.25% of gross earnings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.9% (depending on income)</td>
<td>23.81% of gross earnings subsidies; cost of early retirees</td>
<td>8% of gross earnings</td>
<td>8% of gross earnings</td>
<td>12.55% of gross earnings subsidies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td></td>
<td>subsidies</td>
<td>SUPPLEMENTARY PENSION</td>
<td>State provision</td>
<td>Insurance-based</td>
<td>State provision and supplementary pension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifying age</td>
<td>60 years for women; 65 years for men</td>
<td>60 years for women; 65 years for men</td>
<td>65 years for women and men</td>
<td>65 years for women and men</td>
<td>60 years for women; 65 years for men</td>
<td>65 years for women and men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifying period</td>
<td>11-12 years for basic pension</td>
<td>20 years of contributions</td>
<td>120 months of contributions</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>180 months of contributions</td>
<td>for basic pension: 3 years’ residence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calculation basis</td>
<td>for supplementary pension: linked to index-linked gross earnings</td>
<td>average earnings of final 10 years, adjusted to inflation rate</td>
<td>for supplements: gross earnings</td>
<td>full pension paid after 50 years of insurance</td>
<td>based on average earnings of best 15 years of insurance</td>
<td>full basic pension paid if resident in Sweden for 40 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum pension</td>
<td>basic state pension = €116 per week for single person; supplements for spouse (€69) and children (€18)</td>
<td>€425 per month; supplements of between €28 and €134 linked to age and earnings</td>
<td>€1108 per month based on 40 years of contributions; otherwise reduced pension</td>
<td>basic pension = €869 per month for single person; cohabiting couples receive €598 each</td>
<td>basic pension = €631 per month for single person; €900 per month for married person with supplements for dependent children</td>
<td>basic pension = €327 per month for single person; €267 each for couples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up-rating of pensions</td>
<td>Increased annually according to rate of inflation</td>
<td>Increased annually according to rate of inflation</td>
<td>Increased according to earnings</td>
<td>Increased twice yearly according to average earnings</td>
<td>Increased annually according to earnings</td>
<td>Basic pension increased annually according to inflation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on BMGS (2003)
4.2.4 Income Adequacy and Poverty

Public pensions and other state transfers represent a major component of older people’s income in all (West) European nations. While the foregoing discussion of institutional differences regarding Europe’s pension systems provides an indication of the degree to which pension incomes seek to replace employment earnings and to link older people’s incomes to those of society as a whole, it tells us relatively little about the adequacy of these incomes. Older people with inadequate pension incomes are prone to poverty and may be vulnerable to different forms of social exclusion (Scharf et al., 2002).

There are a number of ways of assessing the adequacy of older people’s incomes. At one level, it is useful to compare the incomes of older people with those of younger age-groups. Table 4.2 draws on income data collected by the OECD in a range of European nations. Analysis of the share of disposable income available to different age-groups confirms a consistent pattern (Förster and Pearson, 2002: 15f.; Hauser, 1999: 115). In all countries reported here, the trend is for incomes to reach a peak in the years leading up to compulsory retirement, before falling off after retirement age. By the age of 75 and above, there is a marked decline in the share of average income held by older people. These patterns are fairly consistent over time and, in most nations, subject to only minor change. Differences between nations are more marked. For example, younger senior citizens (aged 65-74 years) in the ESAW nations Sweden, Austria and the Netherlands had disposable incomes that were within ten per cent of the national average in the mid-1990s. In Italy and the UK, the incomes of this group were significantly lower. Interestingly, when examining the incomes of those aged 75 and above, a different pattern emerges. Here there is greater similarity between nations, but Italy stands out as having the highest average income in this age-group. In the UK, people aged 75 and over have a disposable income that is just 74% of the national average.

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5 An exception here is Luxembourg, for which Hauser (1999: 115) reports similar ratios for those aged 65-74 and those aged 75 and above.
### Table 4.2 Relative disposable incomes by age groups, EU / ESAW countries

**Average income of entire population = 100**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Older adults (Age 51-64)</th>
<th>Younger senior citizens (Age 65-74)</th>
<th>Older senior citizens (Age 75+)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mid-1980s</td>
<td>mid-1990s</td>
<td>mid-1980s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>109</strong></td>
<td><strong>112</strong></td>
<td><strong>86</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Förster and Pearson (2002) Table 3, p. 16

* Average based on 17 OECD nations, not only the 12 reported here.

For some groups within the older population, vulnerability to low incomes is greater than for the older population as a whole. In particular, Hauser (1999: 117) reports significant differences in the equivalised pension incomes of men and women, and of lone pensioners and pensioner couples. The gender gap is particularly marked in Luxembourg and the Netherlands, but is also evident in Italy and the UK. Older women who live alone tend to have the lowest incomes in all EU nations (Winqvist, 2002: 5). In the UK, for example, lone female pensioners have a net equivalent income that represents just 85% of that of a pensioner couple (Hauser, 1999: 116).

It is notoriously difficult to generate robust measures of poverty in cross-national research. Not only do countries adopt different views about the conceptualisation and measurement of poverty, but there are also weaknesses in the way in which relevant data are collected (Spicker, 2001). Nevertheless, it is useful to finish this sub-section with an overview of recent data relating to the degree to which older people in the EU and ESAW nations experience poverty. These data arise from an analysis of the European Household Panel Survey of 1999, and broadly correspond with earlier findings from the Luxembourg Income Study (Hauser, 1999: 119f.). Poverty is judged to exist where a person lives in a household whose (equivalised) income is at a level below 60% of overall median household income (Table 4.3). Such an approach suggests relatively low levels of poverty affecting older people in the ESAW-nations of the Netherlands and Sweden. Respectively 6% and 7% of people aged 65 and over in these countries were in poverty. Directly comparable data are not available for Luxembourg. However, a poverty rate of just under 6% is
reported for this country, when a measure based on 50% of median household income is adopted (Luxembourg Government, 2002: 11), suggesting that Luxembourg belongs to the group of nations with low pensioner poverty rates. In Italy and Austria, poverty rates were somewhat higher, and were at a level broadly similar to that of the EU as a whole. In Italy 16% and in Austria 21% of those aged 65 and over were affected by poverty. The situation is very different in the UK where (according to this measure) 40% of people in this age-group experienced poverty (Austrian Government, 2002).

### Table 4.3 Poverty rates for older people*, EU / ESAW countries, 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All age groups</th>
<th>People aged 65 and over</th>
<th>People aged 75 and over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Poverty measure based on 60% of equivalised median household income.

In almost all countries, poverty is more commonly experienced by women and also increases with age. Thus, women aged 75 and over are generally most acutely affected by poverty. This is particularly evident in the UK, where half of women aged 75 and over were living in poverty in 1998. An exception to this general pattern is found in the Netherlands, where there is a slightly higher risk of old age poverty for men and little difference in the situation of people belonging to different age groups.

#### 4.2.5 Health Care Policies

There is wide variation within EU nations in relation to the nature of health care systems. This is also reflected in the proportion of national wealth that is devoted to health expenditures (Table 4.4). Within the EU member states, the proportion of GDP devoted to health care ranges from 6% in Luxembourg to 10.6% in Germany. The two ESAW nations with the highest level of health spending in 2000 were Italy and the Netherlands (8.1% of GDP in each case).
Table 4.4 Health expenditure and GDP, EU / ESAW countries, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total expenditure on health as % of GDP</th>
<th>Index of health expenditure per head (Germany = 100)</th>
<th>Public expenditure on health as % of total health care expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg*</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden**</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU Average</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Source: OECD Health Data 2002, 4th ed. (calculations by authors)
** 1999 data

According to Hill (1996), the state can play a number of different roles with regard to health care. It can act as a regulator of health care, as a funder or purchaser of health care, and/or as a provider or planner of health care.

First, in relation to regulation, the state's role generally involves determining who is allowed to act as a health care specialist, and to guarantee a broad similarity of treatment for patients. While the state lays down the rules about who can practice medicine, the regulation itself is often delegated to a variety of professional bodies (doctors, dentists, opticians, nurses etc.). A second way in which the state acts as a regulator has historical roots and links in with the earlier discussion of the development of European welfare states. In this respect, the state often became involved in health care in the first place as a means of regulating the terms of private health insurance. This acted as a means of protecting people from exploitation under privately based health insurance, and to ensure that all citizens had access to adequate health care.

Second, in terms of the state's role as a funder or purchaser of health care, there are in principle a number of ways in which health care systems can be funded (see Hill,
1996). However, in practice, two basic systems exist within the nations of the European Union (and ESAW) (see also Ham, 1992; Freeman, 1999: 82). First, there are the comprehensive, national health service schemes that are found in the ESAW nations of Italy, Sweden and the UK. The major part of the funding for these systems comes from general taxation, though some contribution from employees and employers is usually required (in the UK, this operates through the National Insurance scheme; in Italy and Sweden contributions are linked to earnings). Second, there are the insurance-based health care systems, such as exist in the ESAW countries of Austria, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. Such systems are funded primarily through insurance contributions paid by both employees and employers, with the state providing additional subsidies to meet budget deficits and to ensure equality of health treatment. Insurance-based systems vary to the extent that they may be free to individuals at the point of use (Austria and the Netherlands), or may require individuals to make direct payments to medical practitioners that are subsequently reimbursed from insurance funds (Luxembourg). In all EU nations, there has been increased emphasis in recent years on the partial self-financing of certain health care treatments. This encompasses contributions towards the cost of medication, general practitioner consultations and hospital stays. However, in most cases vulnerable groups, including older people, are exempted from the requirement to contribute to their health care costs.

Regardless of the nature of the health care system that exists within the EU nations or the level of resources devoted to health care, there are a number of problems that are common to all (Hill, 1996). These include:

- over-emphasis on hospital services.
- inefficient use of hospitals.
- lack of incentives to deal with patients in primary care.
- inequities in quality and distribution of health care.
- inadequacies in preventive health care.
- failure to accommodate alternative therapies.

Third, in relation to the way in which health care is provided to individuals, depending on the funding model in place, the state can act as a provider of health care in several ways. In the UK, Sweden and Italy, the state both funds and provides/plans health care. In the Netherlands, where hospitals are run as not-for profit institutions, the state neither funds nor provides health care. In Luxembourg (Kerr, 1999: 38), the state provides hospitals, but these are funded independently. Since the state is generally involved in funding health care, the main question which arises is of the relationship between the nature of provision and the funding method.

It is not always easy to identify the state’s role in relation to the funding and provision of health care, especially since this can (and does) shift over time. For example, in Britain, the state began as neither a provider nor funder (pre-war), then became both provider and funder (after 1948). Since the 1980s, health care reforms have seen the state shift away from its provider role (through the creation of independent trusts; fund-holding general practitioners), whilst maintaining its funding role. Such reforms have sought to introduce market practices into a health system that was regarded as too inflexible. In particular, there have been attempts to give patients greater choice over their health care, to tackle the dominance of health care professionals, and to
create competition in a liberalised health care market. A parallel development towards the introduction of market techniques is evident in other European countries (including Sweden and, especially the Netherlands).

An important source of variation between nations, and in part an outcome of differences in funding regimes, can be seen in the numbers of qualified physicians (Table 4.5). The sharpest contrast is between the situation in Italy, which stands out as having a very high proportion of practising physicians, and that in the UK with the lowest proportion for the EU nations. The remaining ESAW-nations have a similar density of physicians that is broadly comparable with the rate for other (West) European nations.

Table 4.5 Density of Practising Physicians, EU / ESAW countries, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Practising physicians (Density per 1,000 population)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece *</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland *</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden *</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>1.8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* 1999 data

4.2.6 Social Care Policies
The context for an analysis of differences between nations in relation to social care policies can be explored in terms of the changing balance in the ‘welfare mix’ across Europe (discussed in Baldock and Evers, 1992). This encompasses changes in the roles and responsibilities of the state, the family, the private sector and voluntary organisations in terms of the provision of social care services to individuals experiencing different types of welfare need (Hugman, 1996; Tester, 1996). The main factors which have promoted policy shifts in social care in recent years are similar to those affecting other aspects of the welfare state. These include demographic changes, changing family structures and a transformation of European labour markets. Such changes give rise to important – and sometimes new – social policy questions, raising issues about the balance of the relationship between the family and the state.
Cross-national differences in social care policies have been examined by Millar and Warman (1996) with reference to Castles’s (1993) concept of ‘families of nation’ (see Sections 1 and 3.1 above). In their study of family obligations in 16 European nations (EU15 and Norway), Millar and Warman (1996) use the families of nations approach to illustrate ways in which family obligations are defined in different groups of nations. The emphasis in this particular study was upon three types of relationships: partnering, parenting, and caring. In this respect, three (albeit rather broad) groups or ‘families of nations’ were discerned (see also Anttonen and Sipilä, 1996). These ‘families’ overlap in key ways with the groups of nations identified in typologies by Esping-Andersen (1990) and Leibfried (1993), but there are also some important differences:

- **Scandinavia**: countries which emphasise individual autonomy. In these nations, including the ESAW-nation Sweden, policy is focused on maintaining individual entitlements and guaranteeing that citizenship rights are available to all. People with social care needs can expect to receive support from the state, rather than the family. Consequently, few legal requirements exist that oblige families to provide support to other members of the family. The focus on individual autonomy also tends to lead to a higher degree of equality between men and women.

- **Southern Europe**: these are the Latin Rim countries (Spain, Portugal and Greece) plus Italy. Under the cultural influence of Roman Catholicism, these nations operate policies which contrast most markedly with those of the Scandinavian nations. A key source of difference relates to the roles attributed to the extended family. Alongside the clear obligations that exist within the nuclear family (between partners and from parents to children), there are a range of wider familial obligations that encompass grandparents, siblings, uncles and aunts. In these countries, the family is seen as the first source of support when members are in need. In terms of public policy, the southern European nations grant a considerable degree of privacy to families in order to allow them to fulfil their care obligations. Such a non-interventionist approach raises important questions about the role of women within the society, since most caring tasks (as in other nations) are performed by female members of the family (see Blackman, 2000).

- The ‘middle ground’: represented by the remaining eight nations, in which the nuclear family has obligations to provide care and support. The nuclear family acts as the basic unit for benefits and services and individualisation in taxes and benefits is relatively underdeveloped. Services are intended to support family care and access to these may include a significant degree of discretion, where family support may or may not be taken into account. This is in contrast with the Scandinavian countries where family support will not be taken into account and the Southern European nations in which family support is usually taken for granted. This group is quite large and encompasses a certain amount of variation. Thus, the UK (and Ireland) generally only recognise downward obligations (from parents to dependent children) and in this respect are closest to the Scandinavian countries. The remaining countries (including Austria, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) may also recognise upward obligations from adult children to their parents, and are thus closer to the extended family model.
Such a focus on family and social care obligations adds a new dimension to traditional analyses of welfare state regimes (e.g. Esping-Andersen, 1990). In particular, they encourage a revised interpretation of the way in which welfare is provided in the Southern European nations. According to Millar and Warman (1996), these countries are not simply ‘underdeveloped’ welfare states, but share something of a similar approach, in which the family, in a wide sense, plays an important role.

4.2.7 Social Divisions of European Welfare

In analysing European social policy systems, the approach adopted here has inevitably focused on the broad characteristics of national welfare states. In this respect, the nation state has been adopted as the unit of analysis. The assumption here is that the broad range of social security benefits and welfare services which a particular nation provides are provided on an equal basis for all citizens (this is particularly strong in nations with universalist welfare systems). However this functionalist model of the welfare state is flawed. In practice, citizens do not all have similar needs and interests. Recognition of this point has led a number of social policy experts to promote a conflict model of society. This model focuses upon variations in the circumstances and experiences of different groups within society in terms of the production and consumption of resources; it also recognises that the needs or interests of some social groups will conflict with those of others (Williams, 1989).

In this respect, Alcock (1996) – writing about social policy in the UK – suggests that to ‘understand the development and operation of social policy, it is essential to recognise, and to study, the issue of social divisions’. He goes on to argue, firstly, that the social groups which people belong to will structure their experience of social policy; and secondly, that the political processes by which policies are developed will be determined by the differential power and influence of different social groups. Thus while some groups may be marginalised from the policy-making process – and thereby disadvantaged in terms of welfare services/benefits – groups that have been involved in policy formation may benefit disproportionately from such services/benefits. This particular debate has a long tradition in British social policy, reaching back to the essays of Richard Titmuss (1958). However, it is a debate which has been rather less well developed at European level.

Such social divisions of welfare are generally considered with reference to: social class, gender, ethnicity, age, disability and location. The precise nature of these divisions varies between European nations, although there are clear parallels between countries in terms of the sources of advantage and disadvantage which arise from the operation of welfare systems. Thus, it is possible to argue that social divisions play less of a role in the more universalist Scandinavian systems, than they do in the corporatist or liberal welfare states. This can be illustrated with particular reference to gender divisions.

Despite growing awareness of the gendered nature of social policies – an awareness promoted by the influence of the women’s movement and critical social policy analysts – gender differences remain considerable within many European welfare states. The key point to note here is that those differences which exist tend to operate to the overwhelming disadvantage of women (Langan and Ostner, 1991; Lewis, 1992; Sainsbury, 1996). Significant gender differences relate to:
• **Employment circumstances of men and women.** In this respect, women across Europe generally earn less than men. This can be attributed to the manner in which labour markets are structured. Employment is segregated both **horizontally** (male/female jobs with different status/income attached) and **vertically** (women employed on lower grades in career structure). This variation has important consequences in later life, where the incomes of older women are significantly lower than those of older men in most European nations (see Section 4.2.4 above).

• **Variations in dependency/autonomy between men and women.** In many nations, women form the majority of those who are dependent upon social security benefits, especially amongst the poorest groups such as lone parents and single older people. They are also much more prone to poverty than men.

• **The role of men and women as informal carers.** Home-based caring work is often seen as predominantly ‘women’s work’. Social policies that emphasise community rather than institutional care are founded on assumptions about the presence of sufficient reserves of female carers.

• **Access to, and need/use of, welfare services.** Assumptions about the role of women in society have had long-term effects on women’s access to and use of a range of welfare services – for example, state childcare policies, access to education, community care policies etc.

It is also worth noting that gender itself is affected by a range of other social divisions. Writing about Britain, Pascall (1998: 192) comments: ‘It has become increasingly difficult to write about women as a group.’ Thus the experience of the welfare state is significantly different for women belonging to ethnic minority groups. Women are also divided by social class differences, by differences in marital status and by differences in age.

Comparative analyses of other social divisions, such as that relating to ethnicity, are relatively underdeveloped (Rex, 1992). This also applies to the analysis of divisions based on location. However, it is evident that this particular dimension also represents an important source of diversity within welfare states, and applies even where there is apparent uniformity of service provision or access to welfare. A good example of this relates to the provision of care services to older people in Sweden. In their analysis of municipal data, Trydegård and Thorslund (2001) illustrate a remarkable degree of geographical variation in public care for older people. While in some municipalities, one in three people aged 80 and over received home-help services in 1997, elsewhere the proportion declined to one in ten (p. 182). This leads to the conclusion, that even in Sweden’s social democratic welfare regime, a range of local social policies co-exist (Trydegård and Thorslund, 2001: 183).

It is important not to lose sight of such cross-cutting divisions when considering European welfare systems. Indeed one of the major challenges facing contemporary welfare states is the need to respond to the fundamental social changes which have transformed European societies during the post-war period. Most of Europe’s welfare states were established in an age where the demographic situation, patterns of family formation, household structures, and social and cultural values were markedly different from those of the present time. Coping with population diversity consequently represents an important theme in contemporary social policy debates.
4.3 Summary

In this section, attention has been paid to the national political and social policy contexts that underpin the analysis of cross-national variations in patterns of *ageing well*. Within the conceptual framework adopted in this report (Figure 1.2), these elements are regarded as having a direct impact on the outcome variable *ageing well*, whilst also influencing the development of national age structures. We have also noted that it is difficult to disentangle a discussion of political and social policy systems from the analysis of aspects of culture and geography within the European context.

The analysis undertaken here confirms a pattern highlighted in previous sections. Alongside a certain degree of cross-national similarity, there continues to be significant variation between countries in terms of both their political structures and social policy systems. Drawing these findings together, we find a number of similarities and differences between the ESAW nations in relation to their political systems. While democratic systems evolved slowly over time in four nations (UK, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden), such systems were imposed by external actors in Italy and Austria. In terms of the party systems that have emerged, the moderate multi-party system predominates in Austria, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden. While Italy is judged to be in a state of transition, the UK has an established two-party system. Of the ESAW nations, only Austria has a fully developed federal structure, although the remaining nations show increasing signs of regionalisation of governance. Overall, this analysis suggests a striking degree of similarity between Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden. Austria and Italy also share some common features, while the UK stands out as having a political system that differs in key ways from that of the other nations.

In relation to social policy, the analysis showed that national welfare states evolved according to a wide range of influences. Despite similarities between European nations in terms of the state’s involvement in social policy, and recognition that such involvement is universal, it is evident that nations also differ. The development of social policy was found to be prone to the influence of a complex range of factors that vary from policy to policy and country to country across time periods. The diverse pathways that led, and still lead, to the development of welfare states continue to exert a major influence on contemporary social policy. Although European nations have experienced different paths to the welfare state, it is nevertheless possible to group nations together according to broad characteristics of their social policy systems. Depending on the nature of the policies addressed, researchers have generated different groupings of nations. In general terms, these tend to confirm the findings outlined in earlier sections. In relation to the ESAW study, the UK is seen as representing an isolated example of an Anglo-Saxon welfare state that displays residual characteristics, with a resultant high degree of inequality in old age, and relatively limited resources devoted to health and social care. This contrasts with the Nordic model, represented in this study by Sweden. While the Swedish welfare state has been subject to change in recent years, there is still evidence of its universal characteristics in the way in which it provides for the material and social well-being of its citizens. A key characteristic of this social policy system is the attempt to minimize inequalities between men and women. Between these two poles, are the remaining four ESAW nations. While the Netherlands
displays elements of the Nordic model in relation to universalistic provision of key benefits and services, its social security system is based on the aim of maintaining individuals’ existing positions in the social hierarchy. Austria and Luxembourg correspond most closely to the traditional corporatist model of a welfare state, and back this up with a clear division between men and women in relation to health and social care responsibilities. Italy represents something of a paradox. Alongside its ‘Bismarckian’ social security system and a universal system of health care, it maintains a social care system founded on a traditional familistic model.
Part 5. Conclusions

Within the context of the six-nation ESAW study, this report has sought to examine key socio-cultural differences between EU countries. The main aim has been to provide a suitable framework for the analysis of empirical data collected in participating nations that relate to the five central components of the Global Ageing Initiative’s model of *ageing well*: physical health and functional status; cognitive efficacy; material security; social support resources; and life activity. While the empirical study will highlight similarities and differences between nations that reflect first of all differences in population composition of the respective countries, this report has sought to generate contextual explanations for such differences. In this respect, attention has been paid both to elements of national uniqueness and of cross-national similarities. In particular, we have endeavoured to provide evidence, where this is available, of the clustering of nations across a range of key contextual characteristics.

The choice of contextual characteristics to address has been influenced not only by the model(s) of *ageing well*, but also by our interpretation of the conceptual framework developed by Mellens (1999a). The report has consequently focused on the analysis of three central areas that underpin the understanding of cultural dimensions of ageing. These are demographic structures, the geographical context, and the institutional system (represented by its political and social policy structures). The socio-economic dimension is also regarded as a crucial element in the contextualisation of *ageing well* (Figure 1.2), and this has been addressed at different stages in our analysis.

In this concluding section, we seek to draw the different threads together, emphasising elements of both similarity and difference across the EU / ESAW nations. Ultimately, we seek to offer a means of understanding some of the key findings that will emerge from the empirical analyses.

Examination of the major demographic components underlying Europe’s changing age structures highlighted elements of uniformity and variation between nations. In relation to the former, it is evident that the ageing of populations represents a universal and, in the medium term at least, irreversible feature of western societies. This trend is associated with a dramatic drop in fertility rates across the European continent, and declining mortality rates (especially in early age). The increasing numbers and proportions of older people in society are universally linked to a growing heterogeneity of old age. This can be seen in the increasing differentiation of Europe’s older populations according to such characteristics as age itself, gender, ethnicity, health status, household composition and the like. Yet there are still important differences between nations in terms of their socio-demographic structures. This is amply reflected in the ESAW nations. Italy, for example, has become the EU’s most aged country largely as a result of a substantial decline in fertility. Alongside this trend is a persistence of the more traditional forms of multi-generational living that have largely disappeared in northern European nations. Sweden has life expectancy rates for men and women that are above the EU average, and a relatively high proportion of people aged 80 and over. While the UK also has growing numbers of people in this age-group, it is also notable for its relatively low life expectancy rates. By contrast, Luxembourg and the Netherlands
maintain a relatively youthful age profile. Austria’s age structure is broadly similar to the EU average pattern, yet there are some similarities with Italy in relation to the composition of older people’s households.

The geographical context of ageing was examined with reference to cultural explanations of cross-national differentiation in the value orientations that underpin concepts such as *ageing well*. The importance of incorporating such dimensions into the study of adult well-being has long been recognised in cultural gerontology, and our approach benefited from that of Torres (1999) whose model of *ageing well* seeks to integrate cultural aspects. We then highlighted the relative stability of Europe’s cultural geography and the way in which this influences the clustering of nations around particular culturally-relevant characteristics. Below the level of the nation state, regional geographical variations were discussed in terms of differential patterns of urbanisation and rurality. The third demographic component, migration, was included in this particular debate given its impact on Europe’s regional geographies. One of the central findings to emerge from this analysis is the degree to which European nations belong to a range of different ‘family groupings’ depending on the characteristics under review. Here we drew on the work of researchers such as Castles (1999), Mellens (1999b), Hofstede (1980) and Todd (1985) to illustrate the range of clustering arrangements that pertain. What emerged was a considerable degree of variation within and across Europe in relation to the cultural clusters that individual nations belonged to. No two nations were identical across all types of cluster. The degree of cultural diversity is also evident for the ESAW nations. In particular, Italy and Sweden stand out as having very specific cultural positions. Though belonging to a Continental West European group in relation to its approach to public policy, Italy holds a unique location in terms of other types of clustering arrangement (paternalistic, more developed Latin, communitarian / egalitarian nuclear family structures). Sweden occupies a different position with a specific maternalistic, Scandinavian / Nordic profile, and the dominance of stem family structures. While the UK and Netherlands are similar on some dimensions (both pragmatic and with absolute nuclear family structure in the national centre and stem family structure in the national periphery), they diverge in their public policy making process. In this sphere, the Netherlands belongs to the Continental West European cluster and the UK (uniquely in ESAW) to an English-speaking ‘family’ of nations. Austria and Luxembourg display most similarities, belonging to the Continental West European family, the pragmatic and Germanic clusters (part of Luxembourg) and to the stem family cluster. Some similar patterns can be discerned when examining rural / urban dimensions of geography. For example, the UK and Netherlands show similar levels of urbanisation. But here Austria stands out as having a relatively rural profile. This applies at a regional level to Sweden too, but at a local level this country belongs to the very urbanised cluster of nations. Such features illustrate the regionalisation of urbanisation in Europe. In general, mobility rates and the economic shift reflects the importance of regionalisation in the ESAW countries. In this respect, while all ESAW countries can be classed as post-industrial societies, this should not attract attention unduly from the relative importance of industrial production in the economies of Austria, Italy and Luxembourg, and the persisting role played by agriculture in the national economies of Italy and Austria.

The third theme identified as important in developing understanding of cultural dimensions of ageing drew attention to the political and social policy systems
operating in EU / ESAW nations. Examination of relevant institutional structures tends to confirm a picture of cross-national variation existing alongside elements of cross-national similarity. All (West) European nations have democratic political structures and are governed by the rule of law. However, the evolution of such structures has varied across nations. While democratic systems evolved slowly over time in the UK, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden, there was a much more abrupt transition to democracy in Italy and Austria. There are also differences in relation to political party systems, reflecting in part the social cleavages that characterised nations at the time when their party systems were first emerging. While all ESAW nations appear to have shifted somewhat towards a moderate form of multi-party system, some are more moderate than others (Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden) and some have relatively few parties (Austria and the UK). Italy is judged to be in a state of political transition, but has been marked for most of the post-war period by a remarkable degree of political instability. Overall, we found most similarity in political structures between Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden. While Austria and Italy also shared some common features, the UK’s political system is unique amongst ESAW nations.

Similarities and differences were also evident in relation to social policy systems. In a global context it can still be argued that there is something approaching a ‘European social model’. A considerable proportion of national wealth in EU / ESAW nations is devoted to meeting the social protection needs of citizens. However, the way in which such needs are met is prone to significant national variation. Such variation can be explained in part by the different paths taken by nations to develop their welfare states. Over time, countries have developed distinctive policies based on a range of nationally relevant factors. Nevertheless, when comparing national welfare states, it is also possible to identify clusters of nations that are remarkably similar to the clusterings discussed in earlier sections. For example, the unique position of the UK in terms of cultural family groupings can also be witnessed in the characteristics of its (increasingly) residualised welfare state. Notwithstanding recent reforms, social policy in Sweden continues to its display ‘Nordic’ character, with an emphasis on universal forms of welfare provision. Although the Netherlands shares some Nordic features, its social security system displays parallels with those of the other corporatist nations of Austria and Luxembourg. In terms of income maintenance programmes, Italy too belongs to this particular cluster. However, when we reach beyond an analysis of social security arrangements, Italian social policy adopts a different character. In terms of social care provision, Italy continues to be marked by the persistence of a more traditional familistic model that emphasises family caring responsibilities.

To conclude, the analysis of a range of factors underlying a contextual understanding of ageing well reveals a remarkable degree of diversity across the EU / ESAW nations. While it is possible to group nations together on some key characteristics, there is considerable variation when other factors are drawn in. The challenge in interpreting the results of the empirical analysis of ESAW data is to locate these findings firmly within this contextual framework. Not only will it be necessary to provide explanations for cross-national variation based on contextual differences, but it will also be important to develop an understanding of why cross-national similarities arise despite the existence of such contextual differences.
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