

# Are fertility intentions a relevant measure for policy purposes?

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Focus of this presentation:

The use of fertility intentions to identify needs of policy support for having babies

FERTINT: “Fertility intentions and outcomes:  
the role of policies to close the gap”

Acknowledgement: EC

Starting point:

*"All couples and individuals have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children, and to have the information, education, and means to do so".*

Conclusions, UN Regional Population meeting, Budapest, Dec. 1998

The reproductive right is a fundamental right, efficiently fulfilled for:

- unwanted fertility (family planning)
- infertility
- reproductive health

Significant care taken that people should have reach to adequate information, education, and means.

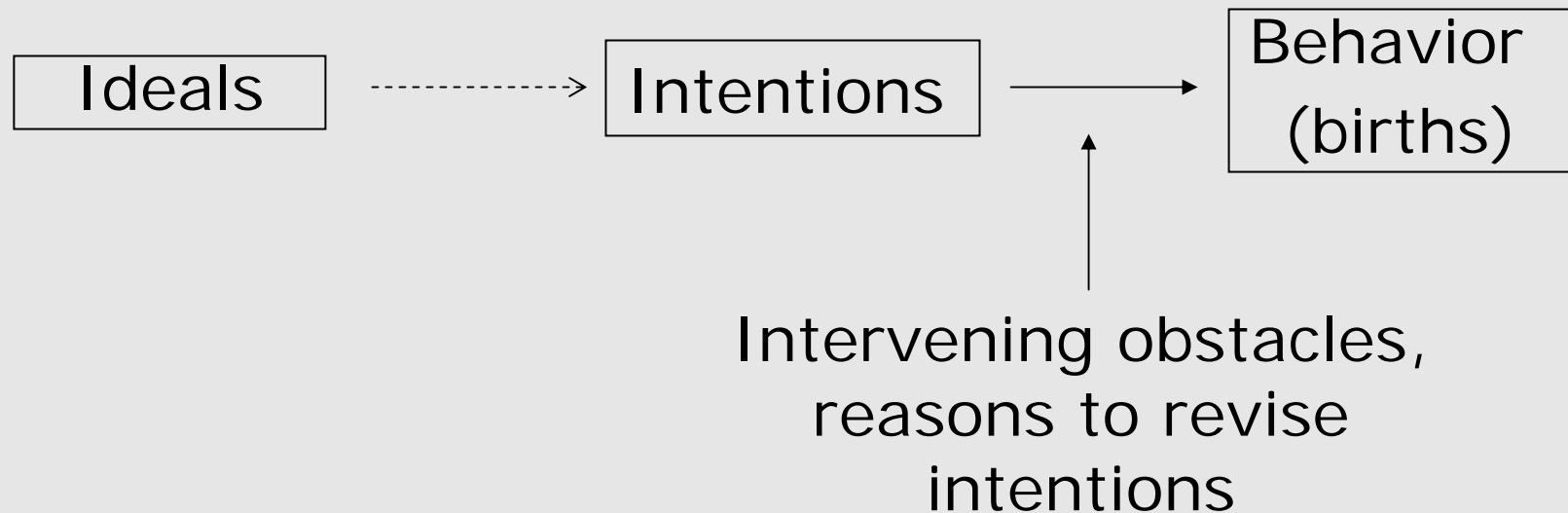
However: what can we say about fertile healthy couples who want to have children but experience obstacles? (*ie. Inverse of unwanted fertility*)

Relevant questions:

1. How can we identify these couples?
2. *What are the obstacles? Which obstacles should be addressed by policies? Do government and society have the capacity to overcome them?*

The main problem: how to measure unrealized fertility (fertility needs), i.e. something not existing?

Viable answer: use a proximate antecedent



# Requirements to intentions: (Ajzen-Fischbein, Miller and Pasta)

- **Temporal stability** (more stable in the short run):  
use a window frame, hence refers to spacing of children  
Ex: in three years
- **Certainty** (the higher the certainty the more likely is the realisation)  
Ex: certainly yes, probably yes, probably not, certainly not
- **Parity**
- **Partner's intentions**
- **Should be fully compatible with behavior**

# Illustration 1: Macro-level FFS, intentions to have a child in two years

	Year of survey	Ideal number of children	Two years later: TFR of intentions	TFR observed
Austria	1996	2.2	1.4	1.3
Belgium (Fl.)	1991	2.3	1.3	1.6
Germany - East	1992	1.6	0.8	0.8
Germany - West	1992	2.0	1.4	1.4
Bulgaria	1997	2.1	0.8	1.2
Czech Rep.	1997	2.0	0.9	1.1
Lithuania	1994/5	2.3	1.2	1.4
Estonia	1994	2.7	2.1	1.4
Latvia	1995	2.4	1.6	1.1
Hungary	1993	2.2	1.7	1.6
Poland	1991	2.4	2.3	1.9
Slovenia	1995	2.2	1.8	1.3
Italy	1995	2.4	2.1	1.2
Portugal	1997	2.6	2.1	1.5
Spain	1995	2.3	2.9	1.2

## Illustration 2: Bulgaria, panel survey, 2002 and 2005, intentions to have a first child

	Intention of other partner:			
Intention of one partner:	Certainly yes	Probably yes	Probably not	Certainly not
<b>Certainly yes:</b>				
No baby, %	38.5	71.4		
Had a baby %	61.5	28.6		
N	174	14	3	4
<b>Probably yes:</b>				
No baby, %		64.3	76.9	
Had a baby %		35.7	23.1	
N		140	13	3
<b>Probably not:</b>				
No baby, %			73.0	75.0
Had a baby %			27.0	25.0
N			63	12
<b>Certainly not:</b>				
No baby, %				77.4
Had a baby %				22.6
N				53

## ... intentions to have a second child

Intention of one partner:	Intention of other partner:			
	Certainly yes	Probably yes	Probably not	Certainly not
<b>Certainly yes</b>				
No baby %	52.8	62.9	60.0	79.0
Had a baby %	47.2	37.1	40.0	21.1
N	108	97	30	19
<b>Probably yes:</b>				
No baby %		69.6	80.6	77.4
Had a baby %		30.4	19.4	22.6
N		349	175	84
<b>Probably not:</b>				
No baby %			84.9	83.9
Had a baby %			15.1	16.1
N			405	236
<b>Certainly not:</b>				
No baby %				89.4
Had a baby %				10.6
N				404

# SUMMARY

Intentions are a *perspective* measure of unrealized fertility and policy needs subject to:

- Rigorous operationalization, following rigorous theories
  - Frequent measurement (frequent use of few questions). Ex. *Eurobarometer*
- Policies that aim to relieve unrealized fertility are not pro-natalist but enhance fertility