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Tomáš Sobotka

Low Fertility in Austria and the Czech Republic: Gradual Policy Adjustments



Vienna Institute of Demography
Austrian Academy of Sciences

Wohllebengasse 12-14
A-1040 Vienna · Austria

E-Mail: vid@oeaw.ac.at

Website: www.oeaw.ac.at/vid



OAW
Austrian Academy
of Sciences

Abstract

This article provides a comparative analysis of fertility and family transformations and policy responses in Austria and the Czech Republic, two neighbouring countries in Central Europe that were until 1989 separated by the “Iron Curtain” that divided two competing political blocs in Europe. Such comparison is partly stimulated by the geographic proximity, shared history and culture of these two countries in the past and their gradual economic and social convergence in the last quarter of century. During this period both societies also grew surprisingly similar in their fertility and family patterns and main family policy trends. Fertility in both countries is relatively low, but not extremely low when compared with the countries of Southern Europe or East Asia, with the period total fertility rate recently converging to 1.45 and cohort fertility rates of the women born in the mid-1970s projected at 1.65 (Austria) and 1.8 children per woman (Czech Republic). Austrian fertility rates have been remarkably stable since the 1980s, while in the Czech Republic fertility had imploded during the 1990s, following the political regime change, before it started recovering in the 2000s. In both countries childbearing has rapidly shifted to later ages and increasingly has taken place outside marriage, with over a half of first births now born to cohabiting couples and single mothers. Czech women retain considerably lower childlessness, possibly due to the persistently strong normative support to parenthood in the country. Family policies, relatively generous in terms of government expenditures, were until recently dominated by a view that mothers should stay at home for an extended period with their children, making the return to employment difficult for women. However, recent policy adjustments in both countries have expanded the range of options available to parents, making the parental leave more flexible and, in the case of Austria, gradually expanding public childcare and supporting a stronger involvement of men in childrearing.

Keywords

Fertility, low fertility, family, family policies, Czech Republic, Austria

Author

Tomáš Sobotka, Wittgenstein Centre for Demography and Global Human Capital (IIASA, VID/ÖAW, WU), Vienna Institute of Demography/Austrian Academy of Sciences. Email: tomas.sobotka@oeaw.ac.at

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Low Fertility in Austria and the Czech Republic: Gradual Policy Adjustments

Tomáš Sobotka

1 Introduction

Austria and the Czech Republic are two neighbouring Central European countries with similar population size (8.5 million in Austria vs. 10.5 million in the Czech Republic) and similar surface area (84 vs. 79 thousand square kilometres). They are positioned in the middle of the European Union country ranking by population size and territory. Until its implosion in 1918, both countries were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Thereafter the shrunken Austria, once the core of the Empire, became a republic administered from its “oversized” post-imperial capital, Vienna. The Czech Lands, an industrial heart of the Empire, gained independence, forming a common country with Slovakia, Czechoslovakia. The paths of these two countries then took different turns. The major long-lasting cleavage emerged after the World War II, when Czechoslovakia became incorporated into the “socialist bloc” of countries dominated by the Soviet Union, whereas Austria, while formally neutral, became a parliamentary democracy and politically and economically leaned towards Western Europe. This division cracked with the fall of Iron Curtain in 1989. Soon thereafter, in 1993, Czechoslovakia split into two independent parts and the Czech Republic was formed in its current boundary. Both countries now belong to the European Union.

This article provides a comparative analysis of fertility and family transformations and policy responses in Austria and the Czech Republic. Such comparison is partly stimulated by the geographic proximity, shared history and culture of these countries in the past and their gradual economic and social convergence in the last quarter of century. An implicit question addressed throughout this article is whether family and fertility trends and the policy responses to them also grew increasingly similar in the last 25 years. I focus mostly on this period, analysing changes in fertility, fertility intentions, family, living arrangements, family values and policy trends in these two societies. To give a wider background, I also discuss longer-lasting fertility changes, in particular the historical transformations in cohort fertility, marked by an early emergence of low fertility in both countries. In conclusion, I discuss the likely future trends and outline the wish list for potential future policy actions.

2 Comparing Austria and the Czech Republic: Similarities and Differences, Continuities and Change

Austria and the Czech Republic have similar culture, including the predominant Catholic religious tradition. In the past both countries were multinational, ethnically diverse societies.

This feature became less prominent in Austria after 1918, when once important migration streams from the other parts of the Empire ceased and even more so during the World War II, when the sizeable Jewish population was liquidated or forced to leave. But the new inflow of the “guest workers” and migrants from Central and Eastern Europe, Germany, Turkey and other countries since the 1960s has made Austria more diverse again. In contrast, the Czech Republic became ethnically homogenous after the forced deportation of the Jewish population to concentration camps in the early 1940s and the expulsion of the sizeable German population (around 2.6 million people) after the World War II.

The historical social, cultural and demographic ties between Austria and the Czech Republic were severed during the lengthy period of state socialism in Czechoslovakia between the late 1940s and the late 1980s. At that time these two countries often experienced contrasting demographic trends, also in the domains of fertility and family (see also Section 4.2). Population trends in Austria progressed in sync with the trends in Western and Northern Europe (especially the neighbouring Germany and Switzerland), including the experience of the baby boom and a strong endorsement of the traditional family in the 1950s and 1960s. Trends in the Czech Republic had converged with those in eastern European countries and were marked by an almost universal marriage, early transitions to marriage and first birth, and very low childlessness. Women were expected to work, while they took almost all the responsibility for childcare and household duties as well (e.g., Sobotka 2011), whereas in Austria the male breadwinner ideal of the family was strongly entrenched well into the 1980s. Perhaps the main contrast could be drawn with respect to the characteristic family changes associated with the “second demographic transition” (Lesthaeghe 1995, 2010). These trends, including the postponement of marriage and childbearing, emerged in Austria since the 1970s, but they were, except for steeply rising divorce rates, largely absent in the Czech Republic until the early 1990s (Sobotka et al. 2003). Also mortality trends between the two countries diverged as mortality improvements stalled in the Czech Republic in the 1960s-1980s (see also Section 3). At the same time Czech economy was increasingly lagging behind an ever more prosperous Austria.

The collapse of the authoritarian state-socialist system in Central and Eastern Europe paved the way to the radical changes in family and fertility in the Czech Republic in the 1990s and 2000s (Rabušic 2001; Sobotka et al. 2008; Kanotorová 2004; Klasen and Launov 2006). These changes were mostly an accelerated version of the trends observed earlier in Austria, resembling the fast-paced second demographic transition (Sobotka et al. 2003). The political regime change also led to economic liberalization, reforms in social and family policies, as well as many new life choices for younger people. Previously unknown experience of economic uncertainty emerged, as well as new phenomena of unemployment and rising income differences. Housing was privatized. Opportunities for self-realization, travel, leisure, and political activities or pursuing business vastly expanded, as did the enrolment in university education, transforming the lives of young adults (see also Section 4.5). Post-secondary education became perceived as a prerequisite for future success in life and the share of young people aged 20-24 enrolled in education has tripled from 12% in 1994 to 37% in 2012 (own computations based on OECD and Eurostat data). Similar, but more gradual, expansion

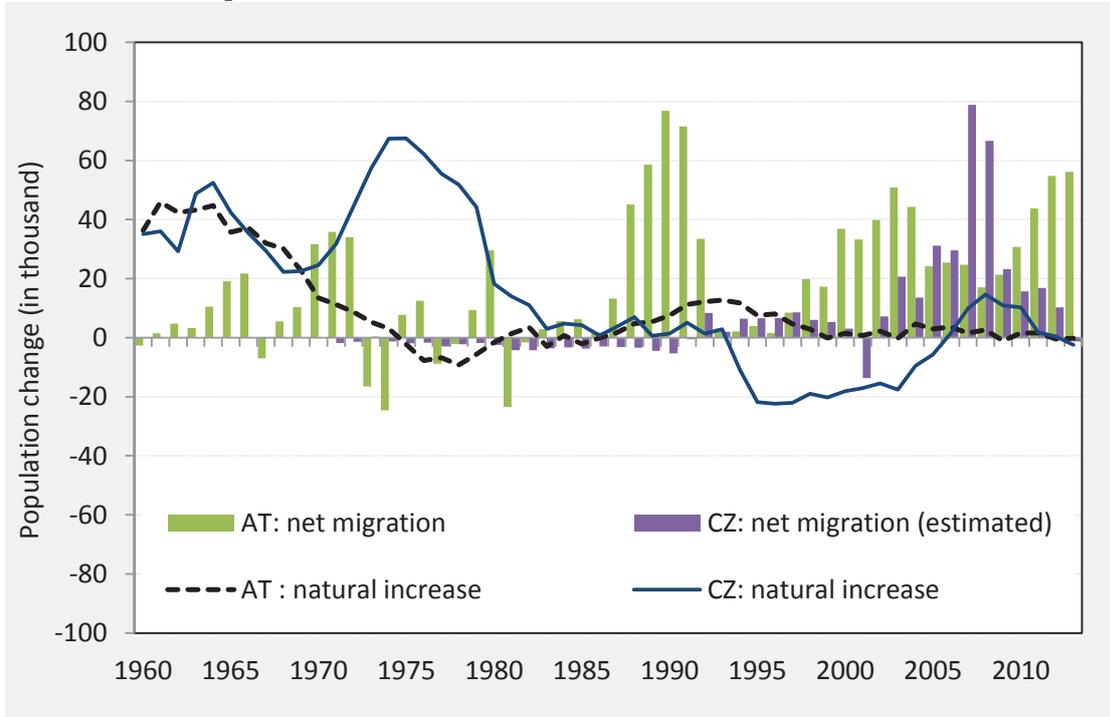
occurred also in Austria, where the enrolment in education at age 20-24 doubled from 15% to 29% in the same period.

In 2004 the Czech Republic joined the European Union and thus completed the transition from its “Communist” past. However, due to the legacy of its long-term economic stagnation in the 1970s and 1980s, its economy still lags well behind that of Austria, whose living standards are among the highest in the European Union. In 2013 Austria had the second highest GDP per capita in the European Union after Luxembourg, at 130% of the EU-wide level, whereas the Czech Republic ranked 12th from the bottom, at 81% of the EU level. In addition, Austria has emerged practically unaffected by the recent economic recession (see Section 4.3). These economic differences also play a role in the abilities of governments to expand the existing family-related policies (see Section 7). The two countries differ in the importance of religion in public life, which is very low in the Czech Republic. It ranks as one of the most secular countries in Europe (Halman and Draulans 2006; Havlíček 2006) due to its long history of secularization movement coupled with the lasting influence of official anti-religious ideology during the state-socialist period.

3 Population Change and Aging: Key Trends

In a long-term perspective, populations of Austria and the Czech Republic have experienced only a slow growth over the last century, well below the average growth in most European countries (van Zanden 2014: pp. 42-43). Austrian population increased from 6 million to 8.5 million between 1900 and 2014, whereas the population of the Czech Republic grew only from 9.3 to 10.5 million. Besides low fertility rates and some war losses, the main reason for such a slow growth in the Czech Republic was the mass deportation of ethnic German population after the World War II, which between 1945 and 1947 swept away almost entire German-speaking population that had numbered over 3 million before the war. Later, population increase was also dented by emigration to Western Europe during the state socialist era. In contrast, Austrian population, which has had natural population increase around zero since the 1970s, experienced considerable immigration. Migration has become an engine of population growth, which amounted to 10% over the period of 1990-2014 (Figure 1). The cumulated effect of immigration on Austrian population is quite sizeable; in 2013, almost one out of six residents (16%) was born in another country, one of the highest shares in the European Union (Eurostat 2014c). In the Czech Republic, immigration was less intensive on average, peaking before the onset of the recent economic recession. In contrast with most other countries of Central and Eastern Europe Czech Republic did not experience sizeable emigration. In 2013 almost 4% of the population were born abroad. However, the most distinct minority is mostly native-born ethnic group of Roma (about 2% of total population), who are often low educated and constitute most socially disadvantaged and vulnerable population.

Figure 1: Natural population increase (live births-deaths) and net migration balance in Austria and the Czech Republic, 1960-2013



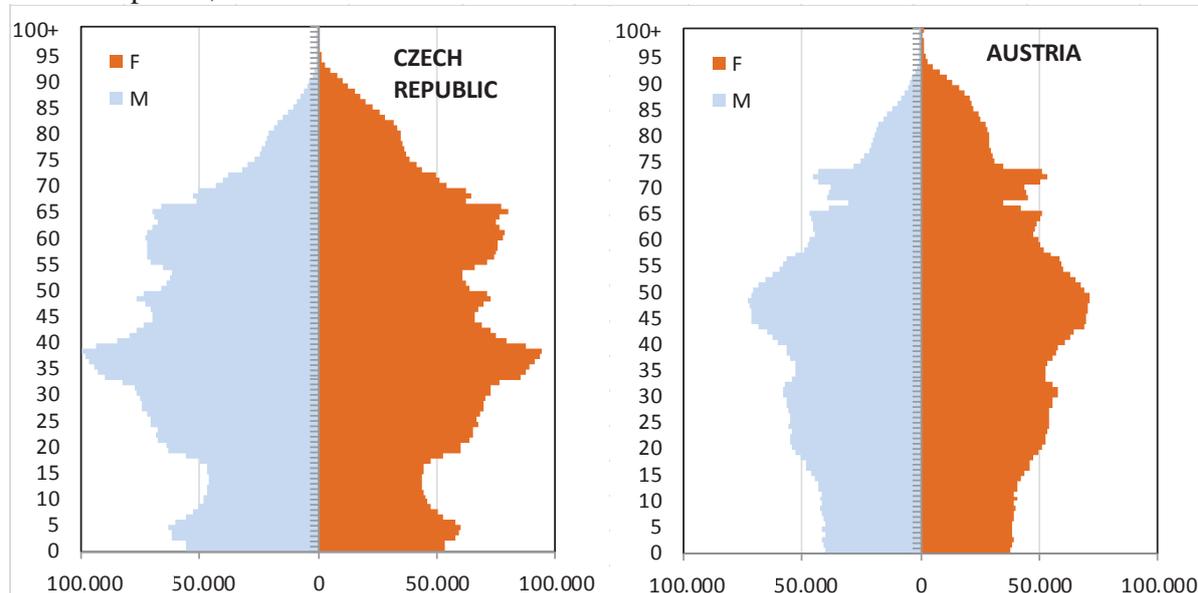
Note: Estimates of net migration in the Czech Republic available since 1971 only. These data for the Czech Republic include inter-censal adjustments (own computations) for unregistered emigration.

Sources: Natural population increase: Eurostat (2014a). Net migration: Austria: Statistics Austria (2014a). Czech Republic: net migration (including population adjustments) published in Eurostat (2014a).

As in other developed countries, populations of Austria and the Czech Republic have aged relatively fast, especially due to expanding life expectancy. Austria experienced continuous mortality improvements since the 1950s, with the life expectancy at birth reaching 83.6 years for women and 78.5 years for men in 2013, i.e. by ten years (women) or twelve years (men) above the level reached in 1970. In the Czech Republic life expectancy at birth is currently by about three years below that in Austria, primarily because of the long period of mortality stagnation during the 1960s-1980s when life expectancy at birth remained particularly low (66-68 years) among men. Since the 1990s fast improvements in health care have quick-started rapid improvements in mortality in the country which continue up to now, with male life expectancy at birth rising by almost eight years since 1990. Diverse indicators of aging show that the Czech population has been converging towards an older age structure of the Austrian population, but remains, on average, slightly younger due to its lower share of the elderly. In 2013, both countries had one fifth of their population below age 20 and the share of people over age 65 will soon reach the same level (in 2013 it was 18% in Austria and 17% in the Czech Republic; computations based on Eurostat 2014a).

Population pyramids for both countries (Figure 2) actually do not resemble pyramids but rather peculiar trees with the widest branches representing baby booms in the distant past. They have some typical features of aged societies, including the relatively narrow basis representing the younger population with the most sizeable age groups being those around age 50 in Austria (resulting from the baby boom of the early- to mid-1960s) and those around age 40 in the Czech Republic (mid-1970s baby boom). Overall, the Austrian “tree” is much smoother, reflecting the stability in fertility and mortality trends of the last decades, whereas the Czech “tree” is uneven, reflecting especially the turbulent ups and downs in fertility in the country (Section 4.2).

Figure 2: Population pyramids: sex and age structure of the population of Austria and the Czech Republic, 2013



Source: Eurostat (2014a).

4 Fertility Change and Differentials

4.1 Long History of Low Fertility in Austria and the Czech Republic: A Cohort View

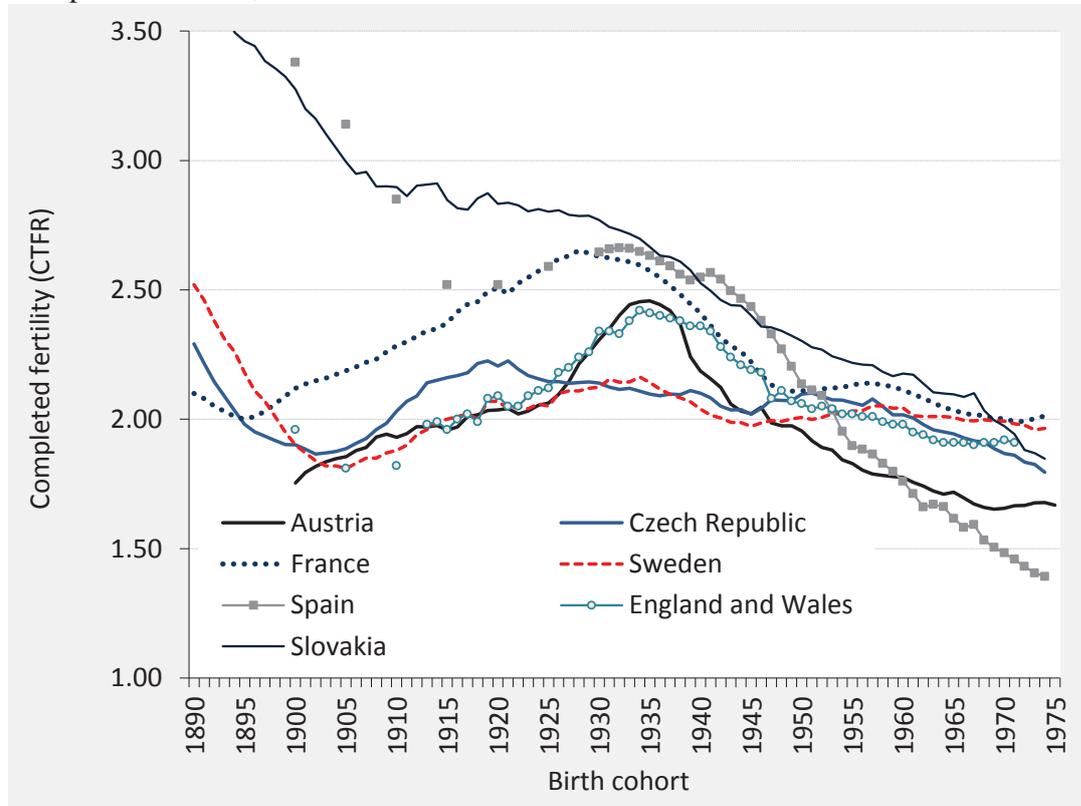
Austria and the Czech Republic have a long history of low fertility, alongside with many countries of Central, Western and Northern Europe. Fertility transition in both countries was practically completed among the late-19th century cohorts and completed fertility fell below 1.9 among the Czech women born in the early 20th century and below 1.8 among the Austrian women born around 1900 (Figure 3, data based on census data). Similarly low fertility levels were reached at the same time in England and Wales, Sweden, and in the neighbouring Germany (not shown in the figure), while countries in Southern Europe, as well as those to the East and South-east had considerably higher fertility rates (Festy 1979). For instance, Slovak

women born in the early 20th century still had a much larger family size than their Czech and Austrian counterparts (3.3 on average), despite the fact that they were born in the same country (the Austro-Hungarian Empire) and lived most of their lives in a common country with the Czech women. The familiar hosts of factors including industrialization, urbanization, improved education, spreading smaller family norms and parents' desire to ensure success in life for their offspring can be seen as the main factors fuelling the early fertility decline (Fialová, Pavlík, and Vereš 1990; Ehmer 2013; Vobecká 2013). Undoubtedly, the World War I and the *Great Depression* of the 1930s also contributed to the historical fertility declines. The period total fertility rates reached a long-term trough during the Depression era, falling to 1.66 in the Czech Republic (CSO 2014a) and to around 1.5 in Austria in the mid-1930s¹ (see also Frejka and Sardon 2004). These fertility rates are not remarkably low judged by our current standards, but they stand out in being deep below the replacement threshold. Given considerably higher child and maternal mortality in the past, fertility needed for population replacement was much higher than today; for instance, in France it reached 2.8 children per woman born in 1900 (Sobotka 2008; Sardon 1991). Assuming comparable mortality levels in Austrian and Czech women born in the early 20th century, their fertility was by about 35% below the replacement level, equivalent to a completed fertility of about 1.35 today.

After bottoming out, cohort fertility increased in both countries among the women born after 1905. But the trend diverges in the cohorts born after 1920. Czech women born in 1920-1960, having most of their children during the state-socialist period, show relatively stable fertility rate at 2.0-2.2 marked by small ups and downs, arguably linked to changes in family-related policies (see also Sections 2 and 7). Interestingly, their fertility trend resembles that of Swedish women (Figure 3). In contrast, Austrian cohort fertility depicts a pronounced baby boom typical of most countries of Western and Northern Europe, peaking at 2.36 children per woman in the 1935 cohort. Austrian cohort fertility trajectory closely resembles that for England and Wales (Figure 3). The Austrian cohort baby boom was followed by a continuous decline, which appears to come to the end only among the women born in the 1970s, for whom a stable cohort fertility around 1.65 is projected (Geburtenbarometer 2014). Similar stabilization or even a slight upturn in cohort fertility has been projected for most countries of Central, Northern and Western Europe (Myrskylä, Goldstein and Cheng 2013). In the Czech Republic, cohort fertility shows a gradual decline among the women born after 1955 and it is unlikely to come to an end in the 1970s cohorts. However, Czech women born in the mid-1970s still have larger family size than their Austrian counterparts, and their completed fertility fell just below the 1.8 threshold. Neither Austrian nor Czech fertility level diverges widely from European-wide average: for the EU countries the completed fertility is estimated at 1.70 for the women born in 1972 (VID 2014). The European-wide variation ranges from 1.4 in Spain, which showed the sharpest cohort fertility decline in Europe (Figure 3) to 2.0-2.1 in France, Ireland and several Nordic countries (VID 2014, a few peripheral countries, namely, Albania, Iceland and Kosovo are outliers with yet higher fertility).

¹ Own estimate based on the Gross Fertility Rate published by the League of Nations (1943).

Figure 3: Completed cohort fertility rate in Austria, the Czech Republic and selected European countries; women born 1890-1975



Note: Data for the cohorts born between 1968 and 1975 are partly projected (own projection based on combining observed cohort fertility data until 2012 with age-specific trend projection for fertility realized after 2012).

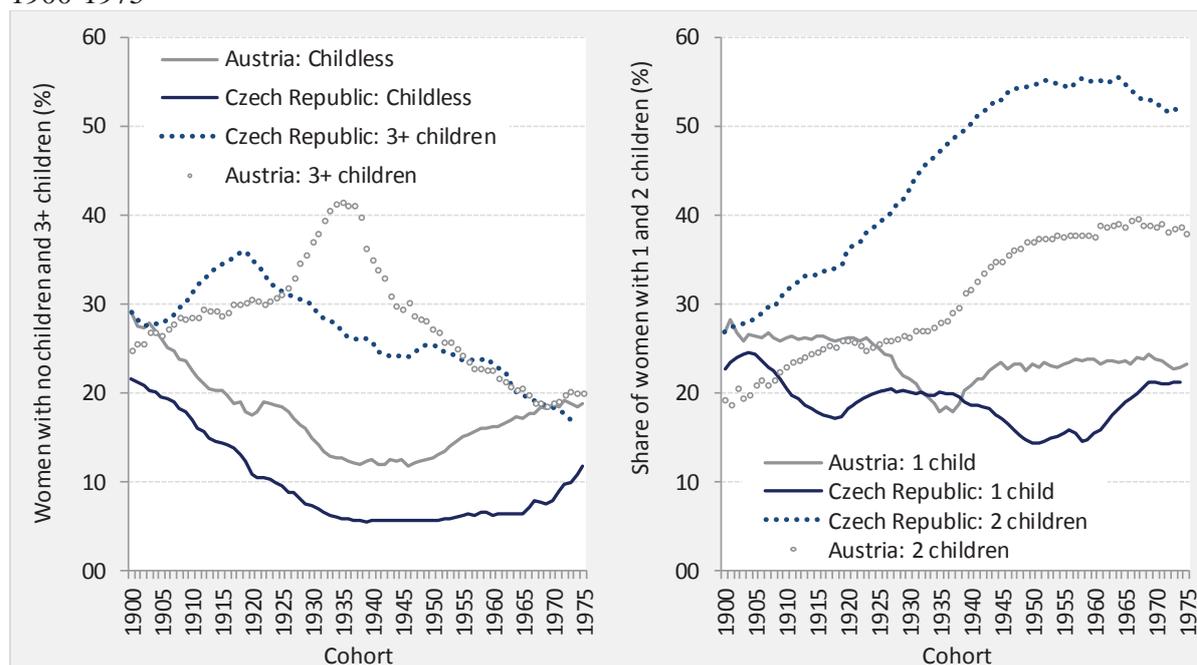
Sources: Austria: Population Censuses 1991 and 2001 combined with vital statistics data for 1984-2012, projected cohort fertility published in Geburtenbarometer (2014); Czech Republic and Slovakia: Population Censuses 1950, 1961 and 1980 combined with vital statistics data for 1980-2012; England and Wales: Festy 1979 and ONS 2013; France: Festy 1979; Sweden: Human Fertility Database (2012); Spain: Festy 1979, Council of Europe 2006.

The low cohort fertility in the early 20th century cohorts was marked by high childlessness, which reached close to 30% in Austria and above 20% in the Czech Republic (Figure 4). This pattern was typical of Western European countries, where marriage and family formation usually took place only when the couple had sufficient means to form a new household, resulting in generally high non-marriage and non-reproduction, especially in harsh times (Ehmer 2013; Hajnal 1965). In both countries cohorts born until the 1960s show a continuous increase in the prevalence of two-child families—particularly pronounced in the Czech Republic—and a fall in childlessness followed by its gradual rebound (only recent in the Czech Republic). Austrian baby boom was driven by a sharp increase in the number of larger families with three or more children. This was followed by a sharp fall in their share since the late-1930s cohort, later reaching similarly low levels around 20% as in the Czech Republic. The recent differences in family size between the two analysed countries still reflect

the fertility contrasts typical of the East-West European political divides up until 1989. In line with the reproduction pattern prevailing in other European state-socialist countries, women in the Czech Republic reached very low levels of childlessness (around 5-6% only) and non-marriage combined with a strong orientation towards a two-child family norm, with well over a half of women born in the 1940s-1960s having two children (Figure 4). Only the recent Czech cohorts analysed here, born after 1965, show a break with this “socialist-era pattern”, depicting a strong increase of childlessness and in the share of one-child families progressing hand in hand with a gradual decline in the share of two-child families, shifting thus closer to the fertility patterns of Austrian women (Figure 4).

The strong long-term orientation of Czech couples towards having two children is also illustrated in their higher second birth rates and lower third birth rates in comparison with their Austrian counterparts (Figure 5). Czech women born in the 1960s and the early 1970s show particularly low third birth rates, marked by a clear “stopping” pattern at two children: only about a quarter of women with two children eventually had a third one. In Austria, the third birth progression rate remained higher and even showed a minor upturn in the early 1970s cohorts, possibly due to larger families among some migrant women (Section 4.6).

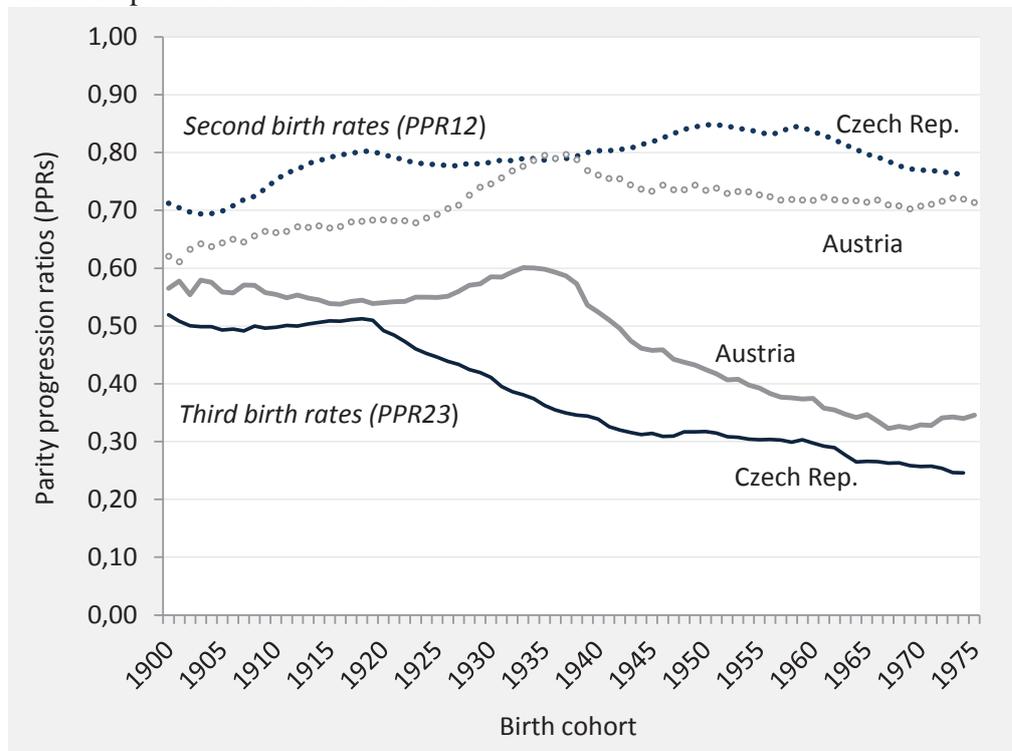
Figure 4: Cohort parity distribution of women in Austria and the Czech Republic born in 1900-1975



Note: Data for the cohorts born between 1968 and 1975 are partly projected (own projection based on combining observed cohort fertility data until 2012 with age-specific trend projection for fertility realized after 2012).

Sources: Austria: Population Censuses 1991 and 2001 combined with vital statistics data for 1984-2012, projected cohort fertility published in Geburtenbarometer (2014); Czech Republic: Population Censuses 1950, 1961 and 1980 combined with vital statistics data for 1980-2012; data for the cohorts 1965-74 were reconstructed and partly projected from Eurostat (2014) data.

Figure 5: Parity progression ratios to second and third births. Women in Austria and the Czech Republic born in 1900-1975



Notes and sources: see Figure 4 above.

4.2 Period Fertility Developments: The Interplay of Quantum and Timing Changes

Period fertility rates in Austria and the Czech Republic in the post-WW 2 era differed considerably (Figure 6). The baby boom of the mid-1950s to mid-1960s in Austria contrasted with falling fertility in the Czech Republic and much of the post-baby boom fertility decline in Austria took place at a time of temporary fertility rebound in the Czech Republic in the early 1970s. Finally, the massive slump in fertility in the Czech Republic during the 1990s occurred when Austrian fertility rates broadly stabilized at relatively low levels.

These contrasts partly stem from the allegiance of these countries to two competing political blocs in Europe (Section 2). In Austria, the post-war baby boom took place during the era of economic recovery, expansion of the welfare state, but also at the height of the “traditional family” characterized by a high prevalence of marriage and a wide adherence to the male breadwinner model. Many of these trends were reversed in the late 1960s and the 1970s, when the shift towards later and less common marriage and family formation began (Figure 7). This also coincided with the gradual increase in the importance of economic activity for women, the spread of the contraceptive pill, introduced in Austria in the early

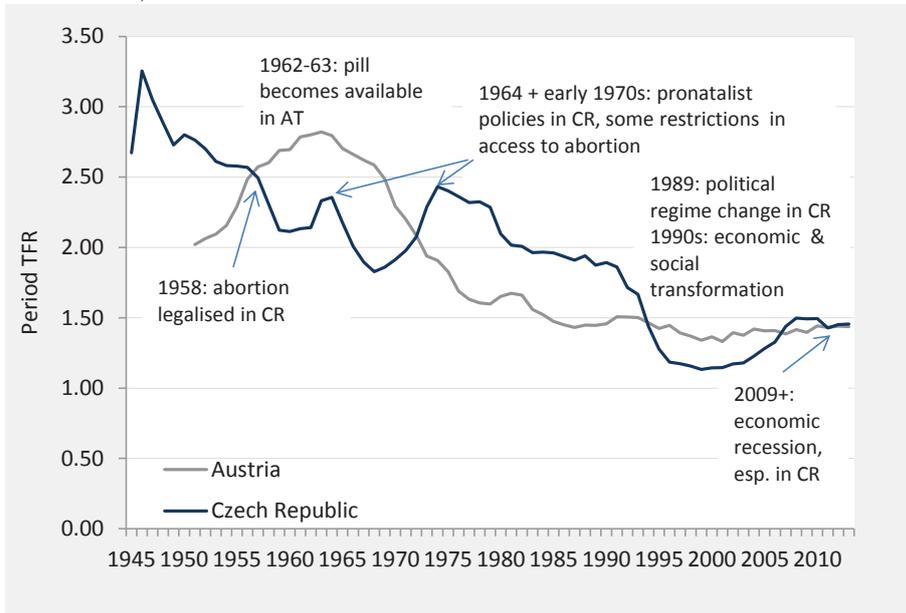
1960s, and later also liberalization of abortion since 1975 (Prskawetz et al. 2008). Since the mid-1980s Austrian fertility depicts remarkable stability, with the period total fertility rate (TFR) oscillating around 1.4, reaching a low of 1.33 in 2001, followed by a very minor recovery.

In the Czech Republic period TFR fell, with two brief interruptions, from the post-war peak at over 3 to 1.83 in the late 1960s. At that time the country was, alongside East Germany, Romania, Hungary, Latvia, and Estonia, one of the few regions in Europe briefly reaching sub-replacement fertility rates. The main reason for this fertility decline was a massive drive to enrol women in the labour force. Gradual expansion of higher education, insufficient opportunities for parental leave or part-time work, as well as region-wide liberalization of abortion around 1958 also contributed to declining fertility (David 1999; Stloukal 1999). The Communist governments tried responding to the unanticipated fertility declines by a combination of “carrots and sticks” in the form of expanding the support for the families with children as well as the tightening of the access to abortion (Wynnyczuk and Uzel 1999; Sobotka et al. 2008; Sobotka 2011; see also Section 7). In the Czech Republic the most concentrated effort in this direction took place in the early- to mid-1970s, when a package of pronatalist policies introduced soon after the 1968 Soviet invasion put an abrupt end to the short-lived political thaw and economic liberalization that tried to reform the “socialist” political model.² A brief upswing in the period TFR followed, peaking slightly above 2.4 in 1974. This short-term baby boom left only a minor imprint on the completed fertility, possibly preventing its decline and contributing to its small uptick in the early 1950s cohorts (Section 4.1 above). After 1974 fertility in the Czech Republic began its gradual but persistent decline, reaching once again the level below 1.9 at the end of the state-socialist era in 1989.

The sweeping economic and social changes in the 1990s led to a massive decline in period total fertility to an extreme low level of 1.13 in 1999. This decline was largely fuelled by the postponement of family formation (see below). A wide gap emerged between the synthetic indicator of period TFR and the actual family size of the cohorts having children during that period. The mean age at first birth among Czech women shot up from a low level around 22.5 years that had persisted over many decades to over 28 years in 2013, a level typical of the current “Western” pattern of late family formation, also in Austria (Figure 7). In Austria, the shift towards delayed childbearing has been much more gradual, starting already in the early 1970s. The relatively turbulent times in the Czech Republic of the 1990s were followed by a calmer period of relative economic prosperity and less unpredictable policy turns, resulting in a gradual recovery of the period TFR, reaching 1.50 at the onset of the economic recession in 2008. Thereafter, period total fertility in Austria and the Czech Republic has temporarily converged to almost identical levels around 1.45 (see Section 7.3 below).

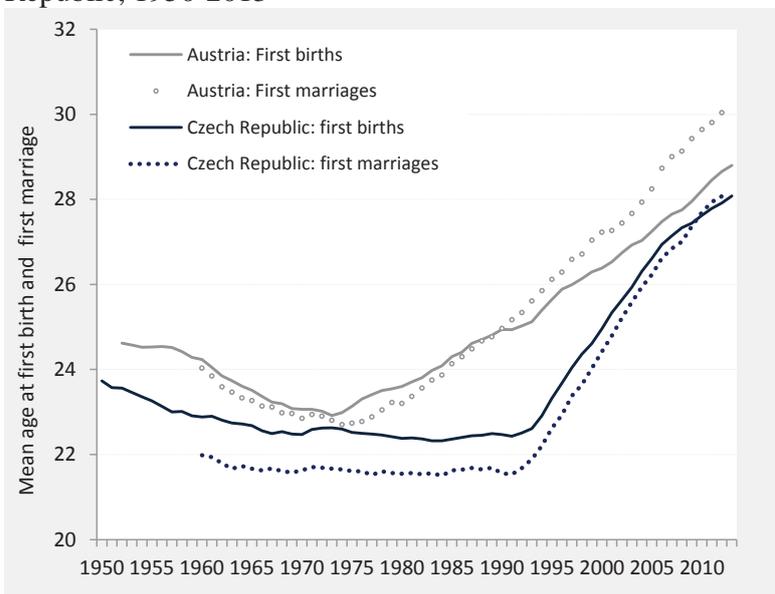
² These new policies included the prolongation of maternity leave, the introduction of extended childcare leave, a maternity allowance, loans for younger newly-wed couples, and the expansion childcare facilities (Frejka 1980; Wynnyczuk and Uzel 1999; Sobotka et al 2008).

Figure 6: Period Total Fertility Rate in Austria (AT, 1951-2013) and the Czech Republic (CR, 1945-2013)



Source: Austria: computed from Eurostat (2014a) and Geburtenbarometer (2014). Czech Republic: CSO (2014a).

Figure 7: Mean age at first birth and first marriage, women in Austria and the Czech Republic, 1950-2013

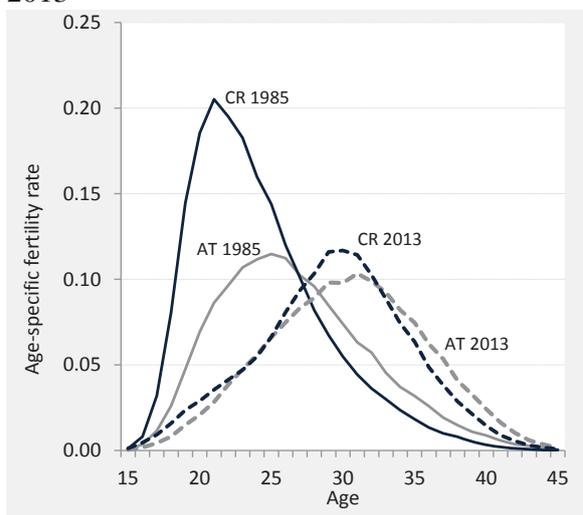


Sources: Mean age at first birth: Austria: Human Fertility Collection (2014) for 1951-1983 (data computed by T. Sobotka and A. Šťastná), own computations and Geburtenbarometer (2014). Czech Republic: CSO (2014a). Mean age at first marriage: Austria: Statistics Austria (2014b), Czech Republic: Council of Europe (2006) for the data until 2004, own computations based on Eurostat (2014).

The “postponement transition” is clearly visible in the shift of age-specific fertility rates, especially in the Czech Republic. In the mid-1980s fertility rates there were strongly concentrated into a narrow age band between 19 and 25 years (Figure 8). By 2013 the age pattern of childbearing grew similar in both countries, with a symmetric shape of fertility schedule and a rather flat peak between ages 28 and 32. In relative terms fertility rates in the Czech Republic slumped by over 80% between ages 18 and 21 from 1990 to 2013, while they increased by a factor of four or more among women aged 40 or older. Mid-1970s cohorts born in the Czech Republic, “caught” in the midst of this massive tempo transition, show a peculiar flat pattern of fertility between their early and late 20s. The likelihood for a Czech woman of having her first child below age 25 fell from over 0.75 in 1990 towards the Austrian level around 0.20 after 2010. In contrast, the probability that a woman childless at age 30 will have a child in the future went up sharply from 0.36 in the early 1990s to over 0.6 in the late 2000s, i.e. above the level reached in Austria (Figure 9). This suggests most of the presumably delayed childbearing is eventually “recuperated” at higher childbearing ages (see also Sobotka et al. 2008 and 2012).

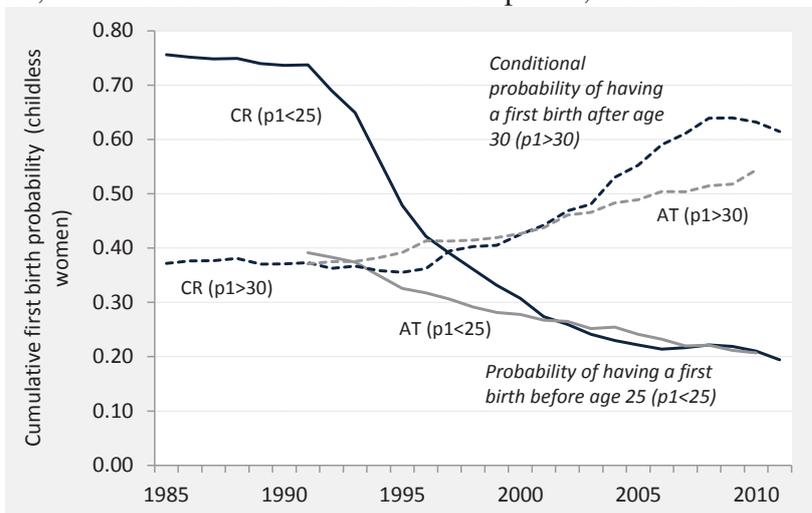
Teenage childbearing, very common until the 1980s in Austria and 1990s in the Czech Republic, became rather unusual, also thanks to the rapid adoption of efficient contraception (Section 4.7). A telling sign of this transformation is a recent cross-over in older and young fertility in Austria: since 2011 women over age 40 have displayed higher fertility rates than those below age 20. Due to advances in medically assisted reproduction, motherhood has increased even at very late “post-reproductive” ages and the number of multiple births in both countries more doubled between 1990 and 2010.

Figure 8: Fertility rates among women aged 15-45, Austria and the Czech Republic, 1985 and 2013



Note: Age is measured in completed years for the Czech Republic and as age reached during the year for Austria
Sources: Austria: Geburtenbarometer 2014; Czech Republic: Human Fertility Database (2014) and computations by Kryštof Zeman (VID) from the data provided by the Czech Statistical Office.

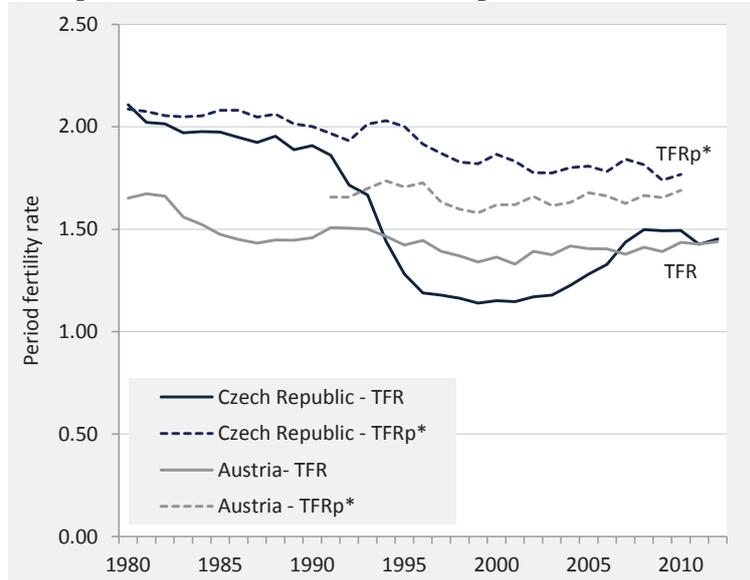
Figure 9: Conditional period probabilities of having a first birth below age 25 and after age 30; women in Austria and the Czech Republic, 1985-2011



Source: Own computations from the Human Fertility Database, accessed 4 August 2014.

To assess the magnitude to which the conventional period total fertility rates were depressed by the shift to a later timing of births, Figure 10 presents tempo-adjusted index of fertility by age and parity, $TFRp^*$, proposed by Bongaarts and Feeney (2006) and Bongaarts and Sobotka (2012). This indicator has been shown to approximate rather closely the completed cohort fertility rates and also to suffer fewer fluctuations than other available tempo adjustment methods (Bongaarts and Sobotka 2012). For Austria, the $TFRp^*$ suggests a stable fertility rate oscillating at 1.6-1.7 in the 1990s and 2000s, by about 0.2 above the ordinary period TFR and, indeed, very close to the completed fertility in the late 1960s and the 1970s cohorts. In the Czech Republic, the $TFRp^*$ tells a very different story of the post-1990 fertility decline than the conventional TFR. Instead of showing a swift fall followed by a gradual recovery, it shows a gradual decline from 2.0 in 1990 to below 1.8 in 2009-10, following closely the cohort fertility trajectory (see Figure 3). The contrast between the two period fertility indicators can hardly be starker. In effect, when the swift changes in the timing of births are taken into account, period fertility rates in the Czech Republic have consistently stayed above those observed in Austria during the last two decades.

Figure 10: Period total fertility rate (TFR) and tempo-adjusted index of period fertility (TFRp*) in Austria and the Czech Republic, 1980-2012



Note: TFRp* is an index of period fertility controlling for age and parity and adjusted for the changes in the timing of childbearing (see Bongaarts and Feeney 2006 and Bongaarts and Sobotka 2012).

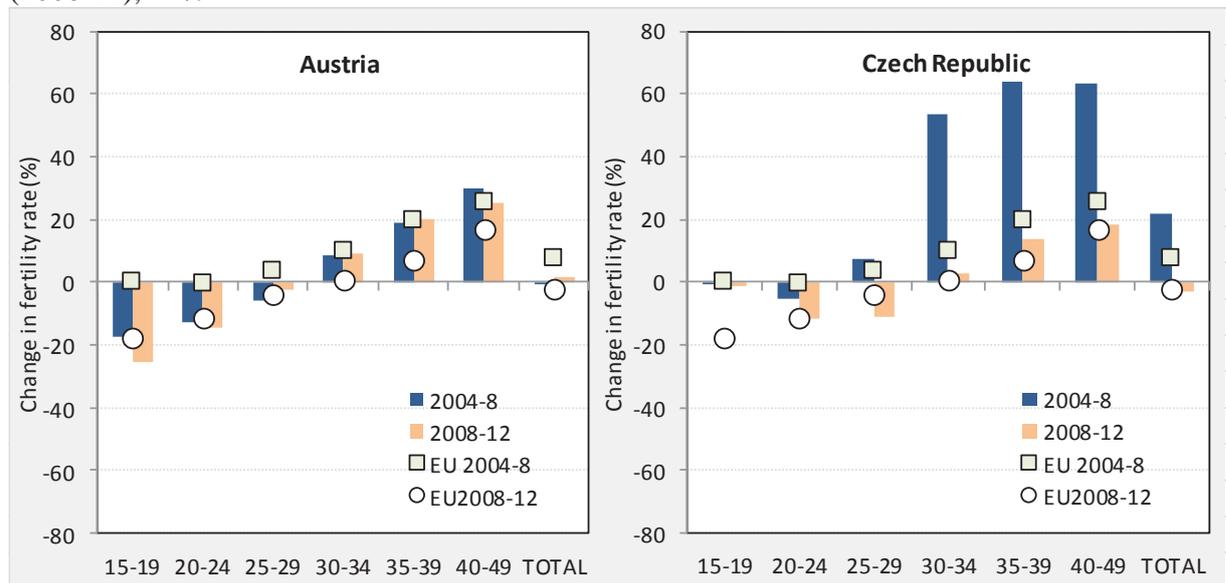
Sources: Human Fertility Database (2014); the TFRp* was computed by Kryštof Zeman (VID).

4.3 Fertility during the Recent Economic Recession

The recent “Great Recession” has put a break to the recovery in period fertility rates across Europe that was under way since the early 2000s (Sobotka, Skirbekk and Philipov 2011; Goldstein et al. 2013; Lanzieri 2013). Across the European Union (EU) changes differed widely between countries, with some, especially in Eastern Europe, bucking the trend of stabilizing or declining fertility (Sobotka 2013). Across the European Union, period TFR increased by 8% in the four years prior to the recession, 2004-8, while it declined by 2% in the subsequent four years. This reversal had a strong age gradient: the younger the women’s age, the more intensive the decline in fertility; after age 30 fertility rates continued increasing, although less intensively than before the onset of the recession (Figure 11). Austria, which was one of the least recession-affected countries in the EU did not experience a change in fertility trend after 2008, but it witnessed an accelerated decline in teenage fertility, which fell to the lowest level ever reported. If fertility rates of 2013 were to prevail indefinitely, fewer than 4 out of 100 Austrian women would have a child before age 20, down from 25 in 1970. In contrast to Austria, a reversal in fertility trend after 2008 was pronounced in the Czech Republic, except for the teenage women, where no change can be traced. Fertility fell among women in their 20s and a strong fertility rebound at ages above 30, which had been underway since the late 1990s, slowed down considerably (Figure 11).

These observed trend reversals in fertility in Europe and the United States are linked to economic uncertainty. The recent recession saw a sharp increase in youth unemployment and a higher share younger people studying, living with parents, but also of those without former employment or study (NEETs). Wages fell or stagnated, government spending on families was curtailed in some countries and mortgages became less affordable (Sobotka, Skirbekk and Philipov 2011, Cherlin et al. 2013). Whereas Austria hardly suffered any symptoms of the economic downturn, Czech Republic encountered a decline in real wages (falling by more than 5% from 2008 to 2013 according to the Czech National Bank), an increase in youth unemployment, and cuts in family-related benefits (see Section 7.3 below).

Figure 11: Relative changes in age-specific fertility rates in Austria and the Czech Republic four years into the economic recession (2004-8) and four years since the onset of the recession (2008-12), in %



Sources: Eurostat (2014a), Geburtenbarometer (2014) and data assembled by Kryštof Zeman (VID).

4.4 Fertility Rebound in Metropolitan Areas?

During most of the 20th century larger cities in low-fertility countries had fertility rates deep below those of the other regions. Expensive housing, more crowded conditions, attractive job opportunities, high share of single persons as well as a strong concentration of highly educated population went hand in hand with higher childlessness and lower family size. Vienna is a prime example of this pattern. At the peak of the economic recession of the 1930s, period TFR in the city reached an extreme low level of 0.61 in 1934 (Gisser et al. 1975: 104, Table 39), just at 37% of the already low Austrian fertility (Table 1). During the post-war period Viennese fertility still remained at an extreme low level, by about 0.9 below that of Austria in absolute terms in the 1950s and most of the 1960s. Later, a gradual convergence with the

Austrian level ensued and by the year 2000 the total fertility in Vienna almost equalled that for the whole country. At present period fertility in Vienna is at one of the highest levels since the mid-1970s (Table 1) and cohort fertility is forecasted to increase from a low of 1.42 among the women born in 1965-70 to 1.55 among the women born in 1980 (Geburtenbarometer 2014).

Table 1: Period total fertility rate (TFR) in Vienna, Prague, and two districts surrounding Prague as compared with the national level (selected years)

	Vienna	Austria	Abs. difference	Relative difference (national level = 1.0)
1933-34	0.61	1.65	-1.04	0.37
1951	1.11	2.02	-0.91	0.55
1963	1.89	2.82	-0.93	0.67
1976	1.27	1.69	-0.42	0.75
1985	1.33	1.47	-0.14	0.90
2000	1.34	1.36	-0.02	0.98
2013	1.40	1.44	-0.03	0.98
	Prague	Czech Republic	Abs. difference	Relative difference (national level = 1.0)
1993	1.44	1.67	-0.22	0.87
1999	1.04	1.13	-0.09	0.92
2013	1.36	1.46	-0.09	0.94
	Prague-East district	Czech Republic	Abs. difference	Relative difference (national level = 1.0)
1993	1.57	1.67	-0.09	0.94
1999	1.21	1.13	0.08	1.07
2013	1.70	1.46	0.24	1.16
	Prague-West district	Czech Republic	Abs. difference	Relative difference (national level = 1.0)
1993	1.65	1.67	-0.02	0.99
1999	1.19	1.13	0.06	1.05
2013	1.66	1.46	0.20	1.14

Sources: Austria: Geburtenbarometer (2014), Gisser et al. (1975), League of Nations (1943). Czech Republic: CSO (2011 and 2014b).

Diminishing differences in relative and absolute fertility can also be observed in Prague and interesting cross-overs have been recorded in two suburban districts East (Prahavýchod) and West (Praha-západ) of Prague, which have seen considerable construction boom and immigration, especially of younger couples, in the 1990s and 2000s. These two districts now have fertility rates well above those in Prague and belong to the regions with the highest fertility in the country (Table 1).

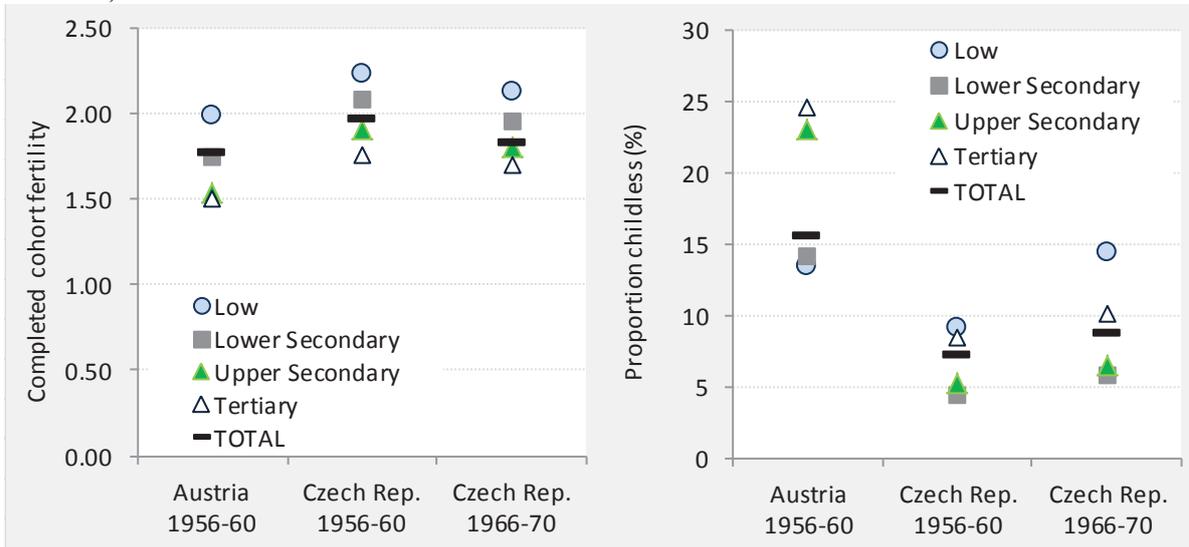
4.5 Education Differentials in Fertility

European countries with low fertility often show relatively strong education differentials in family size, characterized by low fertility levels and high childlessness among the women with higher education (e.g., Basten, Sobotka and Zeman 2014). Austria fits this pattern well: women born in the late 1950s show a negative education-fertility gradient with respect to their completed fertility and positive education gradient in childlessness (Figure 12; see also Prskawetz et al. 2008). Women with upper secondary and tertiary education had a low completed fertility of 1.5 children per woman and almost one out of four remained childless. Highly educated women face difficulties in combining career and family life, which include perceived pressure of their work, limited childcare options for small children and unstable contracts (e.g., Buber, Berghammer and Prskawetz 2011).

In the Czech Republic the education-fertility differentials among women are slightly narrower than in Austria. Unlike in Austria, this gradient is not linked to differential childlessness, but to the differences in family size among women with children. Czech mothers with elementary or incomplete secondary education have 2.5 children on average. Many of these low-educated women belong to the Roma minority that forms the most socially disadvantaged and marginalized population group characterized by relatively early childbearing and a high share of women with large families (Sobotka et al. 2008). Childlessness in the Czech Republic does not follow a clear education gradient, as women with low education born in the late 1960s form a distinct group with childlessness close to 15%, almost double the national level (Figure 12). Furthermore, all categories of women except of the low educated share a strong adherence to a two-child family model, with a majority having two children (see also Sobotka et al. 2008).

Given the observed negative education gradient in fertility, the expansion of tertiary education in both countries had a negative compositional effect on aggregate fertility rates, especially in the Czech Republic where the enrolment increased sharply since the mid-1990s. As in other European countries, highly educated women were also at the forefront of the shift towards delayed childbearing and the education expansion has been an important driving force behind it (Kantorová 2004).

Figure 12: Completed family size and childlessness by the highest achieved level of education among women in Austria (cohorts 1956-60) and the Czech Republic (cohorts 1956-60 and 1966-70)



Note: The following education categories are used, based on International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), 1997 revision. Low education (Primary and lower, incomplete secondary education): Austria: ISCED 0-2A; Czech Republic: ISCED 0-2. Lower Secondary education: Austria: ISCED 3B; Czech Republic: ISCED 3C. Upper Secondary education: Austria: ISCED 3A; Czech Republic: ISCED 3B+4A. Tertiary education: ISCED 5+6.

Sources: Census 2001: data from the Cohort Fertility and Education (CFE) database (2014). Census 2011 for the Czech Republic: data provided by Czech Statistical Office; indicators computed by Kryštof Zeman (Vienna Institute of Demography).

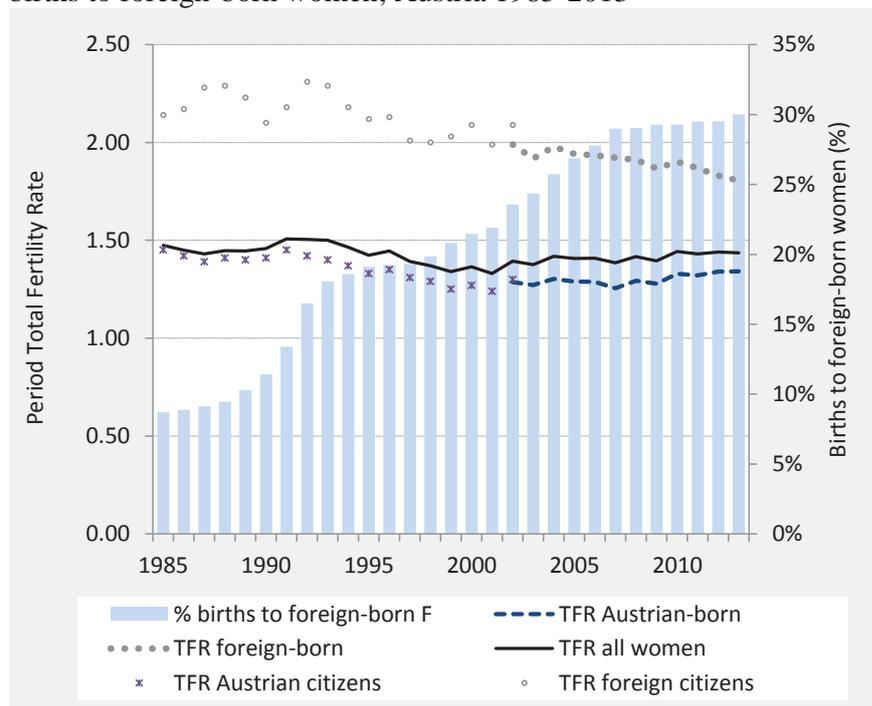
4.6 The Influence of Migration of Fertility in Austria

During the last three decades Austria has experienced considerable immigration, mostly from other European countries and Turkey (see Section 3). As most migrants arrive at relatively young ages, they not only boost the labour force, but also the population of childbearing age. As in many other affluent countries in Europe, migrants in Austria have higher fertility rates on average than the women born in the country and thus have a small positive effect on fertility and account for a rising share of children born in Austria. Recently three out of ten children in Austria were born to mothers who immigrated to the country, up from one out of ten children in 1989 (Figure 13). The period TFR of migrant women has been gradually declining, dropping below 2 in the early 2000s and reaching 1.8 in 2013. At the same time, the TFR of the “native” women has oscillated around the low level of 1.3 since the mid-1990s. Despite this gradual convergence, migrants in Austria “boost” the period TFR of the country by about 0.10 in absolute terms and this net effect on Austrian fertility has been stable since the early 2000s (Sobotka 2008, Geburtenbarometer 2014). Among the major immigrant groups, highest fertility rates were recorded among the women born in Kosovo (TFR of 2.9 in

2013)—in line with its ranking at the top of Europe’s fertility rates (VID 2014)—and Turkey (TFR of 2.2; Geburtenbarometer 2014). The lowest fertility is found among the women from Germany, whose TFR level of 1.4 is similar to that of Austrian women as well as of their country of origin. The migrants’ influence on fertility is strongest in Vienna, which has traditionally served as a magnet for immigration. However, the decline in migrant fertility differential has been more pronounced there, with the period TFR “gap” between migrant and Austrian-born women falling from 0.93 in 2002 to 0.55 in 2013, also in part due to a slight rise in fertility in the latter group (Geburtenbarometer 2014).

In contrast to Austria, migrant women have only a small influence on fertility in the Czech Republic, owing to their smaller number, but also to the absence of a distinct group of higher-fertility migrants. According to the 2011 census, women with foreign citizenship born in the 1960s had lower fertility than women with Czech citizenship (CSO 2013); no statistics is available by country of birth). This applied to all the main countries of citizenship and origin, namely, Slovakia, Ukraine, Vietnam and Russia. Whereas Czech women born in the late 1960s had 1.89 children on average, those with Russian citizenship had 1.34 and those with Ukrainian citizenship only 1.19 children on average (CSO 2013).

Figure 13: Period total fertility rate (TFR) by country of birth or citizenship and the share of births to foreign-born women; Austria 1985-2013



Sources: Geburtenbarometer 2014; Kytir 2005.

4.7 Contraceptive Revolution and Fertility in the Czech Republic

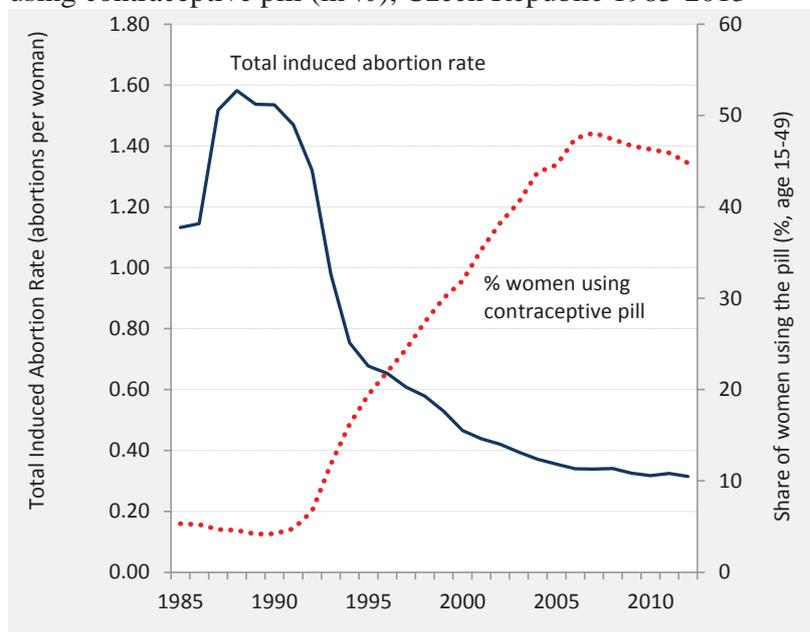
A sweeping spread of modern contraception is an important and often neglected aspect of post-communist transformation in fertility behaviour in the Czech Republic. Up until the early 1990s, population had relatively limited knowledge of and access to the most effective contraceptive means including the pill and traditional contraceptive methods were widely used. Many pregnancies were unplanned and abortion was widely used. The 1993 *Reproductive Health Survey* reported that only 66% of pregnancies in the five years prior to the survey were planned (RHS 1995, Table III.11); this is certainly an underestimate given that induced abortion was underreported by the survey. Among the sexually experienced young adult women, 42 percent reported not using any form of contraception at their first intercourse and 29 percent used withdrawal (RHS 1995, Table VI.4). Among the female population of reproductive age, potential unmet need of family planning was estimated at 31 percent if users of traditional contraceptive methods were also included (RHS 1995, Table IV.15).

During the 1990s and 2000s the change in contraceptive use and abortion could hardly be more radical and women clearly gained effective control over their pregnancies. The share of women of reproductive age registered as using the pill rose more than tenfold from a low of 4% around 1990 to a peak of 48% in 2007, before declining slightly (Figure 14). At the same time, induced abortion rates plummeted, with the indicator of total induced abortion rate diving from a high peak of 1.58 abortions per women (rather close to the level of the period TFR at the time) to a low of 0.31 in 2012, the lowest level observed since the time abortion was legalised in the late 1950s and also below the level reported in some Western European countries with long-established use of modern contraception, including France and the United Kingdom.

Such a massive change in birth control has undoubtedly affected period fertility trends, contributing to the intensive postponement of childbearing during the last two decades, plummeting teenage fertility rates (Section 4.2) and, arguably, also reducing fertility rates by preventing some of the unplanned pregnancies that would have turned, under the previous contraceptive regime, into mistimed or unwanted births.

For Austria, data on induced abortion are not collected. Occasional survey data on contraceptive use suggest a gradual expansion of modern contraception over time, an earlier decline in the use of traditional methods to very low levels, and still a relatively high share of partnered women who do not desire to have a child and at the same time do not use contraception (12% according to the 2008-9 GGS survey (2009)).

Figure 14: Total induced abortion rate and the share of women of reproductive age (15-49) using contraceptive pill (in %), Czech Republic 1985-2013



Sources: UZIS (2013), CSO (2014a).

5 Intended Family Size: A Strong Two-Child Norm in the Czech Republic

As in other European countries intended family size among women (and men) in Austria and Czech Republic consistently exceeds the actual family size they achieve by the end of their reproductive lives. However, this gap is not particularly pronounced as both countries have intentions close to the low end of the range currently observed in Europe (Beaujouan et al. 2013). This is particularly true for Austria where *Microcensus* surveys conducted since 1986 repeatedly found sub-replacement fertility intentions (Sobotka 2009). This is also the case of the most recent Austrian GGS survey of 2012, reporting the mean intended family size among women aged 25-29 below 1.9. Czech women of the same age showed slightly higher intended family size of 2.04 in a GGS survey of 2004 (Table 2). The majority of younger women in both countries intend to have two children. In line with a high actual share of two-child families this orientation is most pronounced in the Czech Republic, where more than six out of ten younger women share this family size preference. Although on the rise, intended childlessness remains uncommon in the Czech Republic, as also reported in numerous other surveys (Pakosta 2009). Austrian *Microcensus* survey of 2012 suggests childlessness intentions are considerably more widespread there. This finding contrasts with the previous surveys analysed in Table 2 and must be interpreted with caution. Surveys for both countries also show a modest negative education gradient in intended family size (Beaujouan et al. 2013; Štastná 2007), partly corresponding to the actual fertility differentials (Section 4.5).

Table 2: Mean intended family size (MIFS) and intended parity distribution among women aged 25-29 in Austria and the Czech Republic; different surveys, 1994-2012

Survey, year of survey	MIFS	Share of women by their intended family size (%)				N
		0	1	2	3+	
Austria, FFS 1996	1.89	4.9	23.3	54.2	17.6	732
Austria, GGS 2008	2.12	4.2	13.5	55.8	26.6	530
Austria, MC 2012	1.87	11.9	12.7	56.6	18.7	653
Czech Republic, FFS 1997	2.13	0.4	11.5	69.0	19.1	245
Czech Republic, GGS 2005	2.04	3.8	14.0	62.8	19.5	400

Notes: FFS = Fertility and Family Survey; GGS = Generation and Gender Survey; MC = Austrian Microcensus, special module on fertility intentions. The distribution of intended family size excludes respondents who did not report their intended family size or were uncertain about it.

Sources: Data computed by Éva Beaujouan, Vienna Institute of Demography / Wittgenstein Centre.

Panel surveys of short-term fertility intentions in the *Generation and Gender Surveys* revealed that many women and men who intended having a child within a three-year period did not realize their intentions. Intentions were frequently “postponed” or abandoned, similar to the findings for some other countries of Central and Western Europe including Hungary and Switzerland (Kapitány and Spéder 2012). Older age (especially 35+), having two children, disagreement with a partner, not having a partner, but also being a man scored high among the factors associated with a high probability of not realizing short-term intention to have a(nother) child in both countries (Štastná 2011 for the Czech Republic; diverse contributions in Buber-Ennsner, Neuwirth and Testa 2014 for Austria).

6 Family Transformations: Increasing Diversity

Austria can be seen as a typical progression of the postponement of key family transitions and a steady erosion of marriage since the 1970s. Czech Republic has experienced similar shifts, but is less typical in that many family changes progressed only stealthily, if at all, during the state socialist era, whereas in the 1990s and the 2000s the country experienced an accelerated family transformation, rapidly catching up with Western Europe (e.g., Sobotka et al. 2003 and 2008). In this section I outline the key contours of changes in family and living arrangements since the 1970s. I also discuss their importance for fertility and position them within the broader context of changes in the value of children, family and gender attitudes.

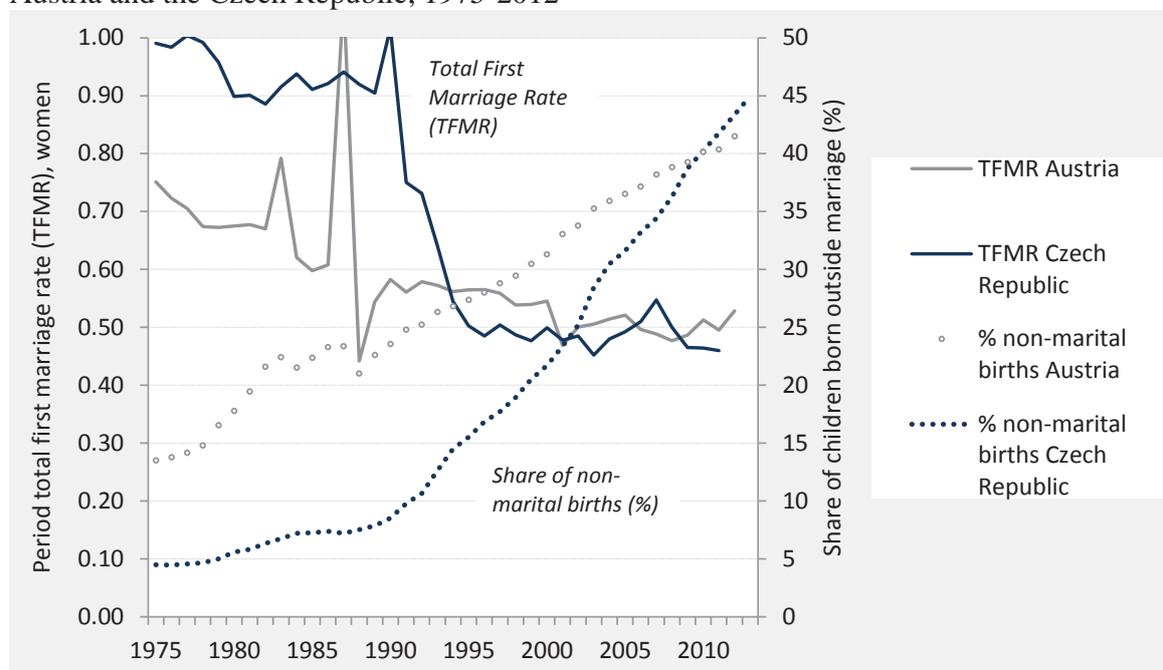
6.1 The Steady Erosion of Marriage

In Austria the decline and the postponement of marriages commenced in the 1970s, hand in hand with fertility decline (Section 4.2). In the Czech Republic marriage rates plummeted in the first half of the 1990s. Since the mid-1990s both countries have had similarly low total first marriage rate (TFMR) of women at about 0.50 (Figure 15), partly reflecting low marriage

rates, and partly the ongoing shift towards delayed marriage. Nuptiality tables for the Czech Republic show a declining probability of first marriage, reaching 59% for women and 51% for men in 2013 (CSO 2014c). In 2012 the mean age at first marriage among women surpassed 30 in Austria and 28 in the Czech Republic, an increase of six years since the early 1990s. The Czech Republic saw an unusually quick shift from the previous pattern of early and almost universal marriage towards less frequent and delayed marriage. The share of women married at age 30 plummeted from 82% in 1995 to 47% in 2012 (own computation from Eurostat data (2014)) and marriage has become rare below age 22, when around a half of women used to be married during the state socialist era.

In both countries, age at first marriage currently exceeds the age at having first child, an illustration of the reordering of key life events, where childbearing increasingly precedes marriage. The diminishing role of marriage for fertility is also seen in a steady rise in the share of children born outside marriage, reaching 41% in Austria in 2012 and 45% in the Czech Republic in 2013 (Figure 15). In the latter case this represents a sharp break with the previous era, when only 4-8% of births took place outside marriage in the 1970s and 1980s. In Austria as well as the Czech Republic most first births now occur outside marriage. As a result, “shotgun weddings,” once common especially in the Czech Republic, became much less frequent. A majority of first marriages in the Czech Republic were concluded by an already pregnant bride in the 1980s and early 1990s; by 2013 their share fell to a quarter and it is yet lower in Austria.

Figure 15: Period total first marriage rate (TFMR) and the share of non-marital births in Austria and the Czech Republic, 1975-2012



Sources: Austria: Statistics Austria (2014a), Czech Republic: Council of Europe (2006) and Eurostat (2014).

Marriage has been replaced by a prolonged living with parents, rapid expansion of cohabitation, but also more single living and “LAT” (living-apart-together) partnerships (Kohoutová and Nývlt 2014; Buber-Ennser, Neuwirth and Testa 2014: Chapters 6 and 7). Living with parents has become more common especially in the Czech Republic (and most other post-communist countries of Central Eastern Europe) as many more young people enrolled in university education and rental housing became unaffordable for them. According to the *Labor Force Survey* data for 2013, one half of Czech men and three out of ten Czech women aged 25-29 still lived with their parents, a sharp increase since the 1990s (Kohoutová and Nývlt 2014). These proportions are lower in Austria (four out of ten men and two out of ten women in 2009 (Buber-Ennser, Neuwirth and Testa 2014: Chapter 4), where fewer people study at a university and affordable social housing is widely available.

Cohabitation has become a dominant form of partnership union among younger people in their twenties (Kohoutová and Nývlt 2014); in fact, marriage without previous experience of cohabitation has become unusual. Paloncyová and Štastná (2012) showed that 90% of first partnerships among the young Czechs born in the 1980s started with cohabitation, up from 23% among those born in the second half of the 1950s. Single living has also become considerably more common, especially among men in their late 20s and 30s. Marriage has been further eroded by high divorce rates: the total divorce rate in both countries reached high levels of 0.4-0.5, although in Austria it has shown a clear trend reversal, peaking in 2007 at 0.50 and declining to 0.40 by 2013 (Statistics Austria 2014b). This means divorce has become a common experience with over 40% of marriages eventually dissolved. Most of the divorcing couples have children below age 18, but the share without children has been increasing over time. In the Czech Republic high divorce rates had signalled the rising fragility of marriage well before the fall of the Iron Curtain, constituting one of the few features of the “second demographic transition” that had progressed earlier there than in Austria.

6.2 Increasingly Diverse Families with Children

The rise of the less traditional living arrangements has also affected families with children. A steady increase in the share of consensual unions with children is observed since the 1990s. Austrian *Microcensus* (MC) data show a jump in the share of these families on the total number of families with children from 3% to 14% between 1990 and 2013 (OIF 2014); comparable data for the Czech Republic indicate an identical share of 14% of cohabiting families with children 2012 (Nývlt and Šustová 2014, based on the *Labour Force Survey* (LFS) data). Much faster increase in the share of cohabiting unions is found around the time of the birth of first child: 29% of Czech families with one child below age 1 in 2013 were cohabiting unions (Nývlt and Šustová 2014); in Austria a quarter of all families with children below age 3 were formed by cohabiting couples in 2013 (OIF 2014).

More problematic from the policy perspective is the persistent high share of single parent (mostly single mother) families in both countries, fuelled by a mix of unintended

conceptions, voluntary single motherhood, and a high instability of marital and cohabiting unions. Heuveline, Timberlake, and Furstenberg (2003) showed that children born to Austrian women had one of the highest exposures in highly developed countries to living with a solo parent before reaching age 15. Cross-sectional survey data show that 15% of all families with children in 2012 in the Czech Republic and 14% in Austria in 2013 were single-parent families (Nývlt and Šustová 2014; OIF 2014). In the Czech Republic, this represents an increase from around 10% in the mid-1990s. In Austria, relatively high share of single mothers was often found already at the time of childbirth; in the past this might be partly explained by some couples intentionally keeping a separate residence in order to qualify for the higher parental leave payments that were only granted to mothers who lived alone (Prskawetz et al. 2008). In the Czech Republic a crude estimation of the share of single mothers at the time of childbirth can be made from the published statistics on fathers' registrations, reported since 2007. Among all children born in 2013, 8% of all children and 9% of first children did not have their father reported. Finally, high family instability coupled with relatively high rates of "re-partnering" imply that many children experience not only the dissolution of their parents' union and the subsequent life in a one-parent family, but later in life their parents form a new union with or without additional children. For Austria, Zartler and Berghammer's (2013) analysis based on survey data shows that one half of divorced or separated mothers with children for a new union within six years after the separation. Overall, 8% of Austrian children lived in such "patchwork families" (blended families) in 2013 (OIF 2014: Table 41).

Both countries show very strong patterning of family transitions by social status. Women and men with lower education experience more complex and generally unstable family transitions with a frequent experience of single parenthood, highest share of children born outside marriage, highest rate of union dissolution, and a high proportion of blended families. This is in line with the evidence of unstable family transitions in other developed countries, suggesting a persistent "pattern of disadvantage" whereby low-educated parents often have limited resources, face poverty and social exclusion (McLanahan 2004, Perelli-Harris et al. 2010). These disparities are clearly illustrated with the recent (2008-13) statistics for the Czech Republic. Almost eight out of ten children born to women with elementary or incomplete secondary education are born outside marriage and as many as one third of these children do not have any record of their father (CSO 2014c). One quarter of families of women with low education are lone-parent families (Nývlt and Šustová 2014). In contrast, about a quarter of women with university education give birth outside wedlock, only 2% of births to these women occur without fathers' registration and 9% of families of university-educated women are lone-parent families.

6.3 Family Instability: A Slight Negative Effect on Fertility

Austria and the Czech Republic share a pattern of unstable families and also relatively frequent formation of new unions, including re-marriages. If broken partnerships are rapidly replaced by new relationships—especially when coupled with a strong motivation for childbearing—union instability might be a mildly pronatalist force (Billari 2005). If, however,

many divorced and separated do not find a partner for a long period of time, or do not have another child soon after they form a new couple, the net effect on infertility might be negative. On balance, partnership instability appears to have a slight negative effect on fertility, especially for women, which is in line with the contemporary evidence for most European countries: Van Bavel, Jansen, and Wijckmans (2012: 22) show that in 23 countries including Austria “childbearing following divorce does not make up for the ‘lost fertility’”. Buber and Prskawetz (2000) found that one half of Austrian couples for whom the current union is the second one for at least one partner, had a shared child. Recent Census data for the Czech Republic show relatively small differences in completed family size for married (including remarried) and divorced women as well as women living in consensual unions. Among the women born in 1966-1971 (aged 40-44 in 2011), mean number of children was 2.00 for those currently married, 1.87 for the divorced and 1.86 for the cohabiting ones (including divorced).

6.4 Shifting Family Values and Attitudes

To illustrate the ideational background of contemporary fertility and family patterns and preferences described above I sketch out changes in family-related attitudes in the two analysed countries. In a nutshell, three main conclusions can be drawn. First, populations of both countries have widely accepted non-traditional living arrangements, especially unmarried cohabitation, also for raising children. Potentially, this has a positive effect on fertility as it broadens the range of available normatively sanctioned options for couples (and single people) of the arrangements they consider suitable for childbearing. Second, the societal attitude towards having children remains more pronatalist and less open for childlessness in the Czech Republic, whereas voluntary childlessness is rather widely accepted as a lifestyle option in Austria, partly owing to its widespread occurrence there (Section 4.1). Third, both societies show a preference for a prolonged stay of parents (preferably mothers) at home with children during the child’s first three years of life, although over time this view has declined in importance in Austria.

Repeated surveys of attitudes show that the acceptance of unmarried cohabitation, especially among the partners who intend to marry in the future, has become nearly universal. Also the tolerance of other less traditional living arrangements has widened. In the Czech Republic, the strongest shift in the ten years since 2003 has been observed in the approval of parenthood outside marriage: the share of respondents stating that people intending to have children should marry and that for children’s upbringing it is important that the parents are married has declined from 50-60% in 2003 to around 30% in 2011 (CVVM 2014). Chaloupková and Šalamounová (2004: 23, Table 4) show considerable age differentiation in family attitudes in the ISSP survey of 2002, with a new “norm” of premarital cohabitation prior to marriage clearly appearing among young adults, among whom 88% agreed that it is good if people intending to marry live together prior to marriage. Moreover, Czech *European Values Study (EVS)* surveys of 1991-2008 indicate a steady increase in the share of respondents stating that marriage is an outdated institution, which has become especially common among those below age 30 (around 36% approval in this age group; Rabušic and

Chromková Manea 2012: Table 2). Also an attitude to single parenthood is rather tolerant in Austria as well as the Czech Republic. In 2013 a majority of Czech respondents agreed that a single parent can give as good upbringing to the child as two parents (CVVM 2014), whereas 40% of Austrian respondents in 2008 approved of women having a child without a stable partner (Hamachers-Zuba, Lehner and Tschipan 2009).

The two analysed countries are more differentiated in their attitudes towards the importance of having children and their role in individual happiness. Parenthood remains highly valued in the Czech Republic, as it does in other post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Chaloupková and Šalamounová 2004; Merz and Liefbroer 2012). Almost nine out of ten Czech women and men consider having children as a natural part of women's lives (Pakosta 2009). A slight majority of Czech respondents in reproductive age in 2008 agreed that a woman should have children in order to be fulfilled (Rabušic and Chromková Manea 2012: Figure 9), which puts the Czech Republic among the European countries with relatively high valuation of children (Nešporová and Hamplová 2014). In contrast, Austrian respondents embraced this view considerably less often: only 23% of Austrians aged 18-45 agreed with the statement in 2008-9 and the share of those thinking that men need to have children was yet lower (GGS 2009, Part 8).

Both societies share a rather negative view of women in employment during the child's early years. This is particularly paradoxical in the case of the Czech Republic, where the official ideology during state socialist period strongly promoted women's full employment. As in Germany, Austrian working mothers were often seen as "bad mothers" whose children may suffer as a result of their (selfish) career orientation; a term *Rabenmutter* (raven mother) is often used to depict these mothers as neglecting their children (Goldstein and Kreyenfeld 2011).³ Between 1990 and 2008 Austrian society has adopted a more positive view of working mothers, but almost two thirds of the EVS respondents in 2008 still thought small children are likely to suffer if their mother works (Hamachers-Zuba, Lehner and Tschipan 2009: Table 11). Peculiar to Austria is a very strong view of children suffering because their fathers concentrate too much on their work, where GGS surveys found 81% agreement with this statement, highest among the countries where the survey has been conducted (Buber-Ennser, Neuwirth and Testa 2014: Chapter 28). In the Czech society a dual view of small children suffering when their mother works and of the importance of women's employment as a source of the second income in the family (and a means to promote women's independence) persists. In the 2002 ISSP survey about a half of both male and female respondents held traditional views about gender roles, including an agreement with the statement that men should work for pay and women should take care of the household. At the same time, a large majority (88%) of both men and women supported the view that both partners should contribute to the household budget (Chaloupková and Šalamounová 2004: 35, Table 4).

³ An article headline in an Austrian newspaper *Die Presse* summarized the anxious attitude of many women as follows: "Rather staying childless than being a raven mother" (K. Gaulhofer and U. Weiser, December 17, 2012, http://diepresse.com/home/bildung/erziehung/1324991/Kinderwunsch_Lieber-kinderlos-als-Rabenmutter).

7 Family-Related Policies: Key Trends

Although many policy differences persist between Austria and the Czech Republic, both countries share broad family policy trends during the last two decades. This is in contrast with the situation prevailing until the late 1980s, when Austria embraced “conservative policies” characterized by generous cash support for families with children, extended period of parental leave and only limited public childcare, especially for children below age 3 (e.g., Gauthier 2002, OECD 2003, Prskawetz et al. 2008). At the same time, government policies in the Czech Republic enforced women’s employment, typically on a full-time basis, and supported the pattern of early childbearing and universal marriage through preferential housing distribution for families with small children, preferential loans for the newlyweds and other policies (Sobotka et al. 2008). Soon after the political regime change in 1989, Czech social and family policies underwent substantial changes. Unlike in many other countries of Central and Eastern Europe cash benefits were not radically reduced and social policy kept a strong focus on reducing poverty and income inequalities. At the same time, pronatalist incentives have been eliminated, including birth-order specific provision of parental leave and child benefits which favoured larger families. Administrative allocation of housing has been abandoned and gradually replaced by private housing market, including rental housing, with only a small portion of “social housing” retained by municipalities (Lux 2009; Lux and Sunega 2010; see also Section 7.3). Overall, the dismantling of the previous pronatalist policy orientation marked the shift towards a relatively *laissez-faire* approach (Kocourková 2002) combined with an adherence to the more conservative family policy model (often labelled as “refamilization”) preferring a prolonged stay of parents (in practice mothers) at home. This was also characterized by an extension of paid parental leave and a collapse of early childcare for children below age 3 (Kocourková 2002, Saxonberg and Szalewa 2007; see below). Only since the early 2000s, following the fall in fertility to the lowest-low levels, did family policies emerge as an important topic for public discussion, including programs of political parties (Sobotka et al. 2008). Despite these massive changes, some earlier features of work and family patterns among Czech women still persist, especially full-time labour participation of the mothers of older children (Section 7.2 below).

In both countries spending on family policies is relatively high, amounting to 2.6% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the Czech Republic (just at the average of higher-income countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD) and 3.0% in Austria. However, both countries show relatively low spending on public childcare (0.6% of GDP compared with over 0.9% for the OECD average) and above average spending on cash benefits for families (Austria) and tax breaks (Czech Republic; OECD 2014a: Table PF1.1). Below I cover main policy areas—especially parental leave policies, childcare provision and mothers’ labour market involvement— and summarize other policy trends, including the changes during the recent recession.

The development of family policies has been driven by the perceived needs of families with children (in part expressed in different surveys and opinion polls), by the perceived threats posed to the society and economy by low birth rates as well as ideological considerations of the governing political parties and policy recommendations and directives of the European Union. These include in particular policies stipulating equal treatment of women and men as well as an expansion of early childcare below age 3.

7.1 Towards Ever More Flexible Parental Leave

In agreement with the widespread normative support for mothers staying at home with their small children (Section 6.4), parental leave in both countries was developed early on and has expanded over time; it now ranks among the longest paid leaves among the OECD countries. Since 1961 employed mothers in Austria were entitled to paid job-protected leave until the child's first birthday (Prskawetz et al. 2008). In the following decades the leave period was repeatedly expanded and revised, reaching maximum duration in 1991-96 and again since 2002, when job protected leave for employed parents lasted 2 years, but leave-related childcare benefits could be drawn for 30 months or 36 months if both parents participated in the leave. Austria was thus one of the first countries in Europe to provide an incentive for the fathers to actively participate in the leave, applying the "take it or lose it" criterion for distributing the additional leave period.

In the Czech Republic waves of leave expansions culminated in 1995 when leave benefit was expanded up until the child's fourth birthday, although job protection remained set at three years (Kocourková 2002). In both countries parental leave is preceded by paid employment-protected maternity leave, lasting 16 weeks in Austria (with full income replacement) and 28 weeks in the Czech Republic (69% of income replacement; OECD 2014a: Table PF2.1.B).

By coincidence, a major move towards more leave flexibility was made in both countries since January 2008, when a "multispeed" leave was established. Parents could choose between three options, combining different leave durations and cash payments. Subsequent amendments have made the leave yet more flexible. At present Austrian parents can choose from five leave variants with different durations between 12 and 30 months (or 15 and 36 months if both parents participate in the leave), of which four options are not dependent on previous employment history and provide a flat rate leave payment, whereas the fifth option provides a payment amounting to 80% of the pre-leave income for the period of 12 (or 15) months (see more details in Table 3). Parents on leave are also allowed to earn extra income during the leave. Czech Republic has gone yet further in expanding leave flexibility. The total parental allowance is fixed at 220,000 Czech Crowns (CZK) for the entire leave duration (EUR 8,000 as of October 2014), with the maximum monthly payment of 11,500 CZK. This is quite a generous system: Czech Republic now spends more than any other OECD country on financing parental leave (OECD 2014: Chart PF2.1.B). Parents can be economically active during the leave. Both parents can take up the leave (or alternate), but

unlike in Austria or Germany no additional leave entitlement (bonus weeks or months) exist for men. Parental allowance is paid with a flat monthly payment depending on the selected leave duration; parents can decide for any duration ranging from 19 up to 48 months.⁴ On average, parents obtain 46.4% of full-time equivalent wage when on parental leave (data for 2013, OECD 2014a, Table PF2.1.A), which is comparable to some leave options for Austria (Table 3).

Table 3: Parental leave variants and leave benefits associated with them, Austria, 2014

Variant	Flat rate payment				Income-dependent	
	12+2 months	15+3 months	20+4 months	30+6 months	12+2 months	months
Maximum duration for one parent (months)	12 M	15 M	20 M	30 M	12 M	
Pre-leave employment required?	N	N	N	N	Y	
Daily payment in EUR (2014)	33	26.6	20.8	14.53	80% of the previous income (max. 66 EUR)	
Income replacement: leave payment as a share of median annual net income in 2012, in %						
Women	79.1	63.8	49.9	34.8	(80)	
Men	53.8	43.4	33.9	23.7	(80)	

Source: Leave variants: Detailed parental leave tabulation prepared by the Austrian Chamber of Labour (*Arbeiterkammer*); accessed 22 October 2014 at http://media.arbeiterkammer.at/ooe/berufundfamilie/2014_Infoblatt_Kinderbetreuungsgeld_Varianten.pdf. Income replacement: own computations based on the median annual net income in 2012 for women (EUR 15,221) and men (EUR 22,371), published by Statistics Austria.

Frequent changes in parental leave regulations in Austria led to the shifts in the spacing of births, which were documented for the 1990s by Prskawetz et al. (2008), Lalive and Zweimüller (2009) and Štastná and Sobotka (2009). Some parents tried to space their second and later births so that they could qualify for an uninterrupted continuation of their parental leave and the related allowance. This effect was most evident for the second births after 1990 when paid leave was extended from the child's first to the second birthday and even the third birthday if parents took only a part-time leave. Subsequently, second birth rates rose sharply at the duration of two years and fell at durations of 4-5 years since the first birth. It is unclear whether these changes had any lasting effect on fertility. An analysis of Lalive and Zweimüller (2009: 1384-85) suggests that a positive effect in the order of 3.0-3.5% persisted even ten years after the leave change in 1990. However, an analysis of individual birth data by Štastná and Sobotka (2009) found no persistent effects on second and third birth rates ten years since the previous birth among the first cohorts of mothers eligible for the extended leave.

⁴ Information provided by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs at <http://portal.gov.cz/portal/obcan/situace/183/187/4455.html>, accessed 22 October 2014.

7.2 Expanding Childcare Provision in Austria and Parents' Labor Market Involvement

In the 1970s and 1980s the two compared countries had quite a different position in childcare provision: due to the strong support for women's employment, public childcare was considerably more extensive in the Czech Republic, with 17% of children below age 3 and over 80% of children aged 3-5 in public childcare. Comparative shares for Austria were considerably lower, at around 4% for children aged 0-2 and around 65% for children aged 3-5 (own estimates based on Statistics Austria data). The situation reversed in the 1990s and 2000s, when the system of *crèches* practically collapsed in the Czech Republic due to a combination of funding cuts and more mothers staying on prolonged parental leave. In Austria, a gradual expansion of early childcare took place between 1995 and 2005, accelerating thereafter, with the enrolment reaching 23% in 2013 (still below the EU average of around 32%). Also the provision of childcare to children aged 3-5 expanded in Austria whereas it remained flat in the Czech Republic; at present nine out of ten Austrian and eight out of ten Czech children of that age attend kindergarten (Table 4).

In the Czech Republic almost all facilities are open all day. In Austria, where childcare is largely financed by federal regions (with some support from the central government), a large variation in care availability, fees, opening hours and closing days persists. For instance, a majority of kindergartens in the regions of Styria and Tyrol close at or before 2pm, giving parents only limited options for combining employment and childcare, whereas most of Viennese kindergartens remain open until 6pm (Baierl and Kaindl 2011: Figure 22). The city of Vienna shows the strongest commitment towards providing accessible and free childcare for all children aged 0-5, giving massive subsidies for that purpose. This is also clearly manifested in higher rates of early childcare enrolment (Table 4).

Table 4: Average enrolment of children in early childhood care at ages 0-2 and 3-5; Austria and the Czech Republic, 1989-2013

	Children aged 0-2			Children aged 3-5	
	Czech Republic	Austria	Vienna	Czech Republic	Austria
1989	16.8	81.9	..
1995	..	4.6	16.9	..	70.6
2000	4.4	7.7	24.3	81.6	77.6
2005	7.0	10.2	22.1	79.4	82.7
2010	7.3	17.1	28.1	78.1	90.7
2013	..	23.0	40.3	..	90.8

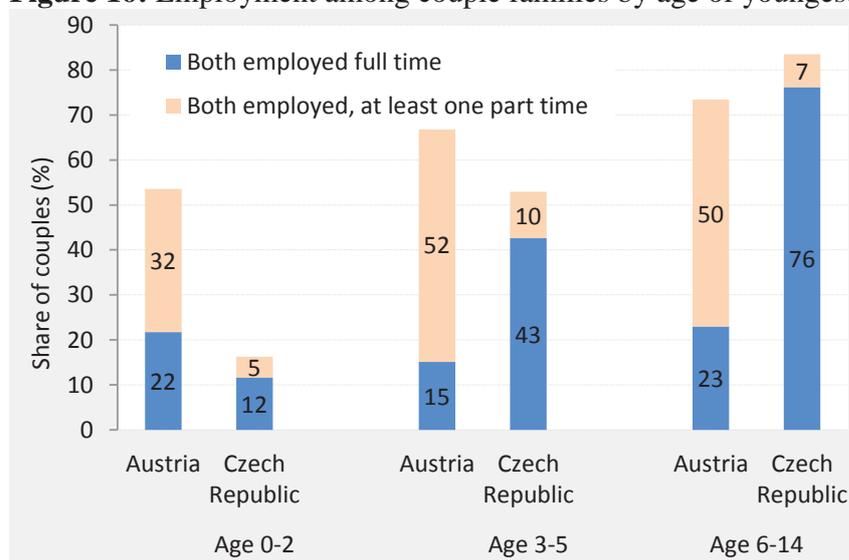
Note: OECD Family Database provides even lower enrolment rates at age 0-2, amounting to 3-5% in the Czech Republic in 2003-11 and 14% in Austria in 2010 (OECD 2014a: online Table PF3.2).

Sources: Austria: Statistics Austria (2014c); Czech Republic: Saxonberg and Szelewa (2007: Table 1) for 1989; UNICEF (2013).

Maternal employment is closely tied to the availability of extended parental leave, the limited supply of early public childcare (especially in the Czech Republic), the prevailing

preferences for home-based childcare (Section 6.4), and, in the Czech Republic, also to the lacking opportunities for part-time employment. The labour market enrolment of mothers and its trend over time therefore differs considerably between the two countries. In the Czech Republic a sharp contrast exists between mothers with children aged 0-3 who typically stay at home and mothers of older children who are typically in full-time employment; only 9% of working mothers of children below age 15 worked part-time in 2011-13 (Nývt 2014). Less polarized and more continuous pattern of part-time employment of mothers is typical for Austria: as the youngest child grows up, ever more women return to employment, but they usually do so on a part-time basis (Figure 16). Berghammer (2014) describes this as a “modernized male breadwinner pattern” and shows it has now become common across all educational categories of mothers in Austria, replacing in importance the dual breadwinner model that was more prominent among higher-educated mothers in the 1980s and 1990s.

Figure 16: Employment among couple families by age of youngest child, 2011



Note: The remaining combinations (up to 100%) are couples where only one person works (full or part-time) and those where both are not in employment. In a vast majority of cases the combination of “both employed, at least one part-time” actually implies that the mother is working part-time and the father is employed full-time.

Source: OECD Family Policy Database (2014a): online Table LMF2.2.A.

7.3 Other Important Policies and Policy Trends

Cash benefits

In Austria as well as the Czech Republic cash benefits constitute a prominent part of their family policy packages (OECD 2011; Thévenon 2011). In Austria, child allowances are most important. These are monthly payments to parents with dependent children up to age 24, which vary with the age of the child and with the number of children in the family (increasing somewhat for larger families). As of October 2014 they vary from EUR 109.70 for families

with one child aged 0-2 up to EUR 158.90 for dependent children over age 19; the latter amount represents roughly 10% of the net median income per person. In the Czech Republic, child allowances are very low (EUR 18-25 per month) and paid only to the families with low income. Birth grants also lost on importance, following spending cuts during the recent recession (see below). In both countries tax deductions and means-tested social benefits keep poverty rates in couple families and among children below the average for the OECD countries. However, these transfers are less successful in alleviating poverty in single-parent families with children, especially in the Czech Republic (Thévenon 2011: Appendix Table A5). In 2011 more than a third of these families were poor in the Czech Republic, in particular because a high share of their income was spent on housing costs (Nývtl 2014).

Housing availability and cost

Austria has a long tradition of providing social housing and around one fifth of the population lives in social housing, which is most common in Vienna. Employment status and income are among the important eligibility criteria, but these criteria are partly determined by municipalities. Moreover, rents in most private rental flats are regulated (Reinprecht 2007), making rental housing affordable for most people, and giving young adults an opportunity to establish their own household. Around 70% of population live in rental flats and the average expenditure on housing is 22% of disposable income, at the OECD average (OECD 2014b). In contrast, only very limited social housing exists at present in the Czech Republic. Most housing is owner occupied, following massive privatization of the 1990s and 2000s (Lux and Sunega 2010), and housing costs are above the OECD average. Especially younger people moving away from their parents and those planning to have children often face difficult options, choosing between living in a crowded flat, paying too high rent, or living in substandard conditions. Compared to Austria, housing costs overburden is much more common in the Czech Republic not only for those living in rental flats provided for market rent, but also for the tenants in flats with reduced rent (Eurostat 2014b). Low-income families and individuals are eligible for housing allowance (*příspěvek na bydlení*), which is, however, often used to pay overcharged price for substandard flats.

Fathers' involvement in childcare

Austrian policy makers have made an effort to support fathers' involvement in childcare, in particular by providing several months of additional parental leave that can be claimed only if both parents participate in the leave. This "daddy quota" policy, established in Austria since 1996, is now in place in several other European countries including Germany and Sweden. However, in practice, Austrian fathers still show very low participation in the leave: according to a newspaper report from 2012, their share on total leave was only 4.7%, while 17% of all fathers took at least some leave, typically of a short duration of several months (Herrnböck 2012). The participation of men in parental leave is yet lower in the Czech Republic. At present, neither Austria nor the Czech Republic provide statutory paternity leave after childbirth.

Assisted reproduction

Both analysed countries provide subsidized assisted reproduction (AR) to infertile women. In the Czech Republic health insurance companies cover most of the costs of 3-4 cycles of AR for women below age 40. Assisted reproduction has a very minor but increasing relevance for fertility rates. Kocourková (2012) estimated that 3.3% of live births in the Czech Republic were born after an AR treatment; this share has further increased in the subsequent period. In Austria, 2.0% of live births in 2010 were resulting from AR (ESHRE 2014). The increased AR use has been manifested in a rising share of multiple births; in the Czech Republic the share of multiple deliveries more than doubled from around 0.9% in the early 1990s to a maximum of 2.1% in 2010 (Kocourková 2012, CSO 2014c).

Cuts in family policies during the economic recession

As Austria was relatively little affected by the economic downturn in 2008-12 (Section 4.3), there were no significant cuts in government spending for families and children. In the Czech Republic, several rounds of fiscal consolidation enacted by the government led to reductions of monetary benefits to families with children (OECD 2014c: Table 1.2). Birth allowances, initially provided to parents of each newly-born child, were first reduced in 2008 and in 2011 became means-tested and available only for the parents of first children. However, in 2015 they were reinstated for second children, although in a reduced amount (CZK 10,000) and only for families with a total income below 2.7 times the subsistence level. Other cuts included reductions in social allowances in 2011-12 and cuts in maternity leave benefits (OECD 2014a and 2014c).

7.4 Policy Evolution: Future Plans and Discussions

Family policies are now high on government agenda in Austria, where a dedicated ministry focuses on families and youth. In 2014 the minister Sophie Karmasin has launched an ambitious policy agenda, with a stated goal of Austria “becoming the most family-friendly country of Europe” by the year 2025.⁵ This goal should be achieved by a continuous monitoring of progress in ten selected indicators of family-friendliness, which also include the gap between intended family size and fertility, the total number of families with children, government expenditures on families, childcare availability, fathers’ participation in parental leave as well as the evaluation of society’s family friendliness in public opinion polls. Specific policy goals for the near future include dedicated funding for childcare expansion in 2015-18. This aims especially at expanding the childcare availability for children below age 3, meeting the EU-wide goal of 33% coverage by the year 2018, but also at improving the quality of childcare and improving German language competence of children with different mother tongue. Furthermore, a radical revamp of the parental leave system from 2016 is considered as well, similar to the changes introduced earlier in the Czech Republic (Section 7.1 above): different variants of parental leave period and the accompanying payments would be

⁵ Press release and additional information available at www.bmfj.gv.at/ministerin/Aktuelles/Themen/Familienfreundlichkeitsmonitor.html.

abandoned; instead, parents would be able to draw from a fixed-sum “childcare account” and flexibly chose the duration of leave, corresponding monthly payment, as well as the way they share parental leave between them. Additional support would be provided for the partners who equally share parental leave.

In the Czech Republic, the family policy agenda falls under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs Expanding childcare availability for children below age 3 is among the priorities, also by the means of cheaper and less conventional solutions, including new company-based kindergartens. as well as an establishment of small “children’s groups” (*dětské skupiny*), essentially a neighbourhood-based and rather informal alternative to public childcare. Before becoming a minister, M. Marksová declared support for a stronger involvement of men in childcare, including a possible adoption of extra months of parental leave dedicated to fathers, as currently available in Austria. This proposal, however, met with rather strong resistance, and no specific plans have been proposed.

8 Concluding Discussion

A quarter of century after the implosion of state socialism Austria and the Czech Republic, once positioned on the opposite side on the Iron Curtain dividing Europe, grew surprisingly similar in their fertility and family patterns and also main family policy trends. Fertility in both countries is relatively low, but not extremely low when compared with the countries of Southern Europe or East Asia. Also, low fertility is not a new experience to the region: in both countries family size of women born in the 1970s is much closer to the replacement level than was the family size of their grandmothers born in the early 20th century. Czech women retain somewhat larger family size and considerably lower childlessness, possibly due to the persistently strong normative support to parenthood in the country. Both countries have adapted relatively well to the sweeping family changes typical of the era of the second demographic transition and both populations are tolerant of cohabitation and to a certain extent of other less conventional living arrangements.

Family policies have attempted to respond and gradually adapt to the challenges of the ongoing family and fertility shifts through a mixture of monetary benefits, flexible parental leave, and expanded childcare coverage. The policy debates have been relatively pragmatic and generally free of explicit pronatalism and nationalism typical of contemporary policies in some Eastern European countries including Belarus and Russia and, to a smaller extent, also Hungary. Especially Austria has made a marked progress towards becoming more family-friendly country where parents have a range of options of how to combine their family and work lives. Both countries are becoming neither family heavens nor feminist paradises, but they no longer fit any of the established categorizations of family policies as their policies are based on a mixture of different measures aiming to address the needs of families, children and parents. Especially Austria can no longer be seen as a “conservative” welfare state promoting traditional division of domestic tasks and the male breadwinner model of the family. Within

Austria, the city of Vienna has adapted particularly well to the transformation in gender relations and family patterns. It regularly ranks among the best cities globally with respect to the quality of life and has also renewed itself demographically (Zeman et al. 2011). It offers the widest coverage of social housing and has by far the best early childcare availability in Austria; as many other cities it has also acted as a magnet for immigration. Not by coincidence, fertility Vienna, extremely low in the past, has converged to that in the rest of the country. It remains to be seen whether other larger cities, with all their amenities, services, public transport, childcare, subsidized housing and wide employment options, could reinvent themselves and become family-friendly places with higher fertility in the future.

Is the current low fertility a potential threat for these societies? Arguably, current period TFRs are below the levels that can be considered “optimal”, but different tempo-adjusted fertility indicators and completed cohort fertility are in the range of 1.6-1.8, which is a moderate sub-replacement level that should not be a matter of concern and can actually be supportive of higher standards of living in the long run (Lee et al. 2014). Moreover, both countries, but especially Austria, have attracted considerable migration flows, which both “rejuvenate” their populations somewhat, but also boost the observed number of births and, in Austria, have a modest positive impact on fertility. When migration is taken into account, Austrian population has been more than “replacing” itself during the last decades, despite the persistent low fertility in the country (Wilson et al. 2013).

Will fertility rates remain stable in the future? The period total fertility is likely to increase modestly in both countries, as the negative tempo effect eventually vanishes once the shift towards delayed childbearing eventually comes to an end. The period TFR may then rebound to the levels around 1.6-1.7. This expectation is broadly in agreement with the view of selected population experts (Basten et al. 2014), but higher than the main projection scenarios currently produced by national statistical offices. The answer is more difficult for longer-term trends in family size, also because fertility intentions in both countries are at the lower-end of the range typical for the European countries today. However, family size is likely to increase slightly in Austria, where the long-term decline in cohort fertility has come to an end among the women born in the 1970s. A combination of stable economic and policy environment, expanding childcare availability and other institutional adjustments, as well as the continuing immigration from higher-fertility countries may contribute to this slight rebound. The prospects are different in the Czech Republic, where policy adjustments have been more gradual and women and couples still face considerable challenges when deciding about their family plans. It is likely that one child families will become more common there, eroding the prevailing strong orientation towards a two-child family model (Rabušic and Chromková-Manea 2007; Šťastná 2007). As a result, family size in the Czech Republic is likely to decline moderately in the future.

What might be the policy wish-list that would make it easier for prospective parents to realize their fertility plans? Without doubt, institutional adjustments are needed much more than additional monetary benefits. In both countries, higher educated women have the lowest fertility rates and face the strongest obstacles in trying to combine their work and family life;

in Austria many of them remain involuntarily childless. An expansion of early childcare for children below age 3 should be the priority. Austria has made considerable progress, but in the Czech Republic the share of small children in public crèches remains marginal, not only because the prevailing norms still strongly favour home care provided by the mother. Surveys show that the existing demand for affordable early childcare is not satisfied. Also, Czech women have only a slim chance of finding part-time work when they wish so. Creating opportunities for part-time employment and more flexible work conditions should therefore be high on the government agenda. Addressing the lack of affordable housing for younger people and single parents, especially those living in urban areas, should be another priority for Czech policy-makers. In this area they can actually receive plenty of inspiration from Austria. In both countries, governments should pursue policies that are tailored for changing character of the family. For instance, a wider legal recognition of cohabiting couples, including the partnership registration as currently common in France, might help them to obtain more rights (and some duties) with respect to the management of their shared property and children.

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