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Recent trends in union formation and parenthood after separation or divorce in Europe

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Abstract

Over the last three decades, Europe has experienced both diverging and converging social and political changes among European countries that have had an effect on both temporal and structural divorce patterns and post-divorce trajectories. For instance, several southern European countries underwent important legislative modifications regarding divorce (including its legalisation) as well as (or perhaps due to) social and cultural transformations, including the weakening of the traditional family and socially acceptance of divorce, a process that took place in northern Europe several decades earlier. In contrast, most central and eastern European countries endured a period of political, economic and social upheaval from the late 1980s until well into the 1990s. Nevertheless, despite an international convergence in family law and attitudes towards divorce in Europe, country differences in post-divorce repartnering and parenthood still exist today. The goal of this study, therefore, is to describe recent trends in divorce and separation, repartnering and new parenthood whereby gender differences are emphasised. In addition, we discuss whether one could speak of different divorce systems and post-divorce trajectories in Europe. The data that are used come from Eurostat, national statistics institutes and the Fertility and Family Survey.

Introduction

As we know, since the late 1960s in many countries of Western and Northern Europe and about a decade later in the rest of Europe, shifts in values related to family life and children have weakened the 'traditional' family, understood as the nuclear family, an institution that caused interrelated changes in partnership behaviour, family formation and fertility. These changes became characteristic of what later became known as the *second demographic*

transition (SDT) an idea postulated by Van de Kaa (1988; 2004) that describes a substantial and unprecedented progress in cohabitation, the postponement of both the timing of marriage and children bearing, childlessness, lone parenthood, having children outside marriage, having fewer children, the parallel retreat from marriage and from traditional norms of sexual restraint, as well as the increase in divorce (see also Lesthaeghe and Surkyn, 2006).

While progress in literacy and wealth made the first demographic transition possible, increases in female education, female labour force participation and unemployment, economy uncertainty and technological innovation contributed to the SDT. It was the much improved and highly efficient methods of contraception that played a catalytic role, as did improvements in medical technology and communication. By no longer being constrained by material anxieties and social control, the individual has become more concerned with their higher-order needs centered on self-actualization, individual autonomy and recognition (Lesthaeghe and Surkyn, 2006), thus making 'alternative' forms of family and relationship formation more practical, feasible and eventually socially acceptable (Coleman, 2005). Intimate partnerships and sexuality, but also the relationships between parents and their children, have moved away from the realm of normative control and institutional regulation, giving rise to the new ideal of reflexive 'pure relationships' based on mutual consent and the recognition of individual autonomy (Giddens, 1992).

Indeed, according to Sobotka (2008) there is empirical support for the idea that long-lasting changes in both family-related values and family behaviour actually reinforce each other. For instance, both country-level evidence and research on household positions and value orientations in Europe show that there is a consistent relationship between changes in family behaviour and value orientations as countries that have made greater progress in SDT indicators such as lower first marriage rates, increases in mean age at first marriage, extra-marital births and divorce also exhibit most clearly values and attitudes towards family and children typical of the SDT. Another reason is that while economic uncertainty contributes to demographic change, as occurred in central and eastern Europe after 1989, it does not provide the full explanation for it. As a study on the Russian Federation showed, the end of the economic crisis and an improvement in living conditions beginning in 1999 did not bring any signs of return to the previous pattern of family behaviour but more as a strengthening of the structural changes in the model of family formation, including persisting low fertility levels, family formation delay, marriage decline, and rise in cohabitation (Zakharov, 2008). What seems to be driven by economic affluence and characterised by secular individualism and by an orientation towards personal self-fulfilment, the transformation in values and attitudes towards family, children and sexuality seem to be most widespread among the young, better-

educated, and urban populations. Yet, in terms of actual *behavioural* changes typical of the SDT (e.g. a rapid rise in cohabitation and non-marital childbearing), structural constraints frequently marked by economic crisis may actually make it more attractive for people with a socially disadvantaged background (as often the case during the transition process in Central and Eastern Europe) that gradually becomes accepted and adopted by other social groups. Hence Sobotka (2008) speaks of two different possible pathways of behavioural and value changes during the second demographic transition.

Differential patterns of Second Demographic Transition indicators

In spite of the social and economic convergence in European countries that has taken place over the last several decades, social indicators related to the transition to adulthood and family behaviour differ widely among EU countries (Fernández Cordón 1997). This is partly driven by differences in the nature of family systems which have deep historical roots. According to Reher (1998) in the central and northern part of Europe (Scandinavia, the United Kingdom, the Low Countries, much of Germany and Austria) is characterized by relatively weak family links and the Mediterranean region by strong ones. This has not only influenced the timing of the departure from the parental home, marriage and parenthood, but also the propensity to have non-marital pregnancies, to divorce and the amount of family support that is provided to the unemployed and the aged (Billari et al. 2002).

The large country differences in the onset and speed of the SDT and the fact that related demographic trends are still diverging (Fokkema and Liefbroer, 2008) is therefore no surprise. For instance, young adults in Mediterranean countries still leave their parents relatively late compared to northern and western Europe, and when they do it is generally to marry rather than to cohabit or live alone. According to Fokkema and Liefbroer (2008) between 1987 and 2002 it actually became *more* common in Spain and Greece to cohabit with parents at relatively young ages but less so during middle age. While in 2002 54% of 25-29 year-old Spanish women still lived with parents, up from 40% in 1987, for 40-44 year-old women this decreased from 20% to 11%. In Netherlands just 6% of 25-29 year-olds did so in 2002 and less than 1% of the older age group. These proportions were about the same in 1987. Meanwhile, in Eastern Europe, the percentage of the young adult population who lived with their parents was also found to be quite high.

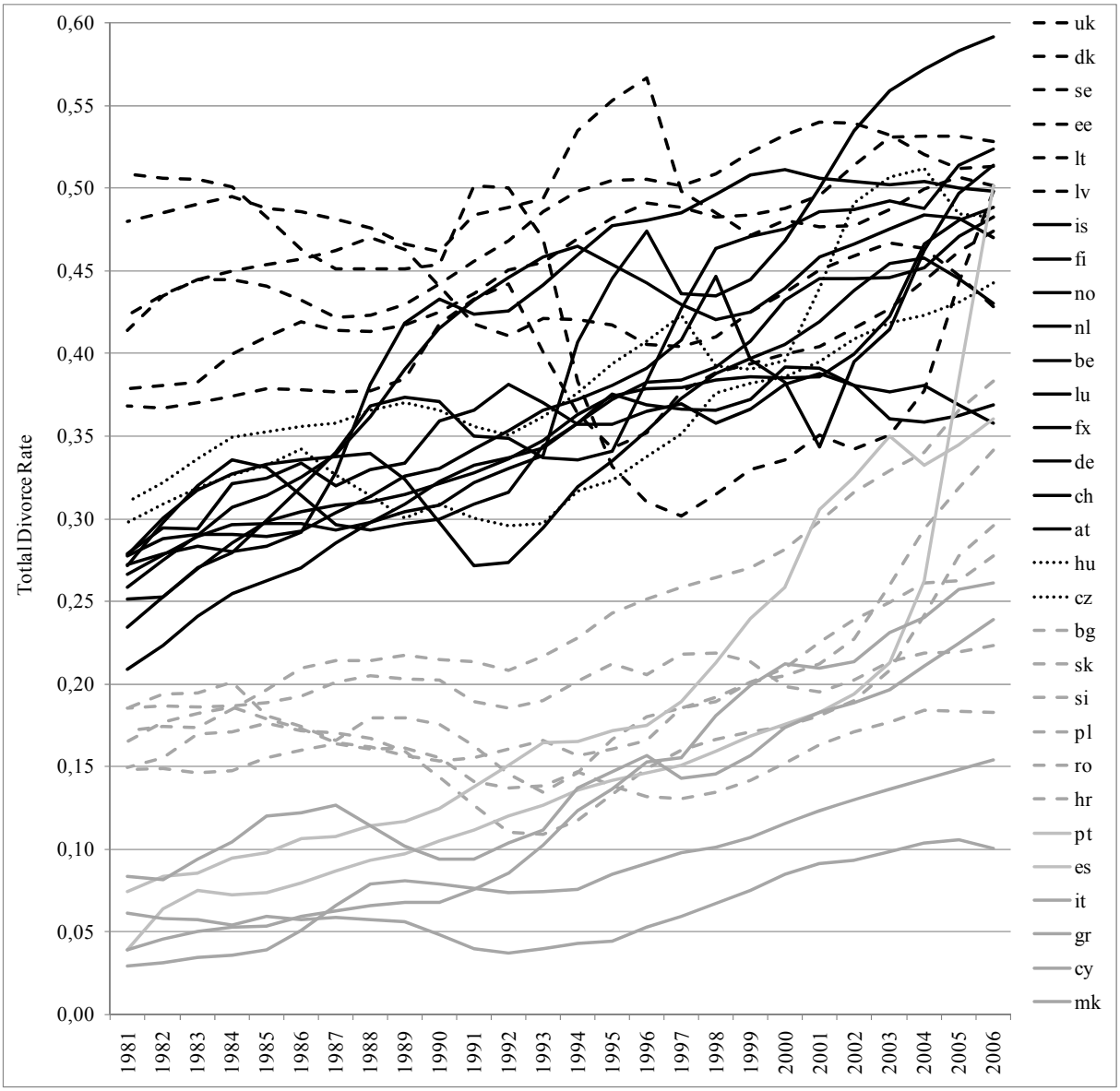
As a result of prolonged residing with parents in Mediterranean countries of cohorts born around the 1970s both union formation and childbearing was also delayed there (Billary 2004). This interconnection between leaving the parental home and marriage can also be observed in societies like Poland and Belgium (Billari et al. (2002). In terms of fertility

patterns, while several northern and western European countries – particularly the Netherlands, Denmark and France – who first experienced below-replacement fertility in the late 1960s and early 1970s showed continual increases in the TFR since the 1990s and currently exhibit relatively high fertility rates of between 1,8 and 2,0 children per women Mediterranean countries are just starting to recuperate after reaching their lowest levels in the second half of the 1990s (Portugal in 2007). Moreover, their lowest TFR was much lower than in the "vanguard" countries (Kohler et al. 2006; http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu; www.cbs.nl; www.statbank.dk; www.insee.fr).

Also indicative of the second demographic transition are changes that occurred with respect to the prevalence of divorce. Coinciding with the aforementioned trends, northern Europe and most parts of western and eastern Europe saw total divorce rates (TDR) increase in the late 1960s-early 1970s (and even earlier in some countries of the former Soviet Union) (see also Sobotka and Toulemon 2008). By 1980, TDRs were highest in Sweden, Denmark, the UK and the Baltic states (between 37% and 51%), followed by the Czech Republic (31%), Hungary (30%), the remaining northern and western European countries (21%-28%), the other central European countries (15%-19%) and southern Europe and Macedonia (between 3% and 8%). In southern Europe and several other more traditional or socially conservative countries like Macedonia, Poland, and Romania divorce rates did not began to rise substantially until the 1990s. Even as late as 1990 the TDR was still below 0.12 in all Mediterranean countries. In spite of rising divorce rates since the early 1980s, it did not result in a convergence of trends as continued increases were also observed in other countries (with notable exceptions being the Baltic States, Bulgaria and Denmark), although geographical patterns have become less defined (Figure 1). Current TDR in Europe varies between 10 divorces per 100 initial marriages in Macedonia to 60 in Belgium (Figure 2), while Spain showed the highest increase since the turn of the millennium: from 18 divorces per 100 marriages to 59 in 2007. This was in part due to the implementation of the new Spanish Civil Code in 2005 that abolished the need to provide a condition for a divorce.

Finally, and as a consequence of increasing rates of separation and divorce (and the dissolution of cohabiting unions whose rates are even higher), new living arrangements and family forms of divorced and separated individuals have become more diverse and widespread (Sobotka and Toulemon 2008). These include living alone, with parents, with own children, or the creation of a new reconstituted family (i.e. a new partner with or without own, common or the partner's children). These which will be studied in more detail in this paper, although before doing so, several issues will be dealt with first.

*Figure 1. Total divorce rate, 1980-2 to 2005-7**



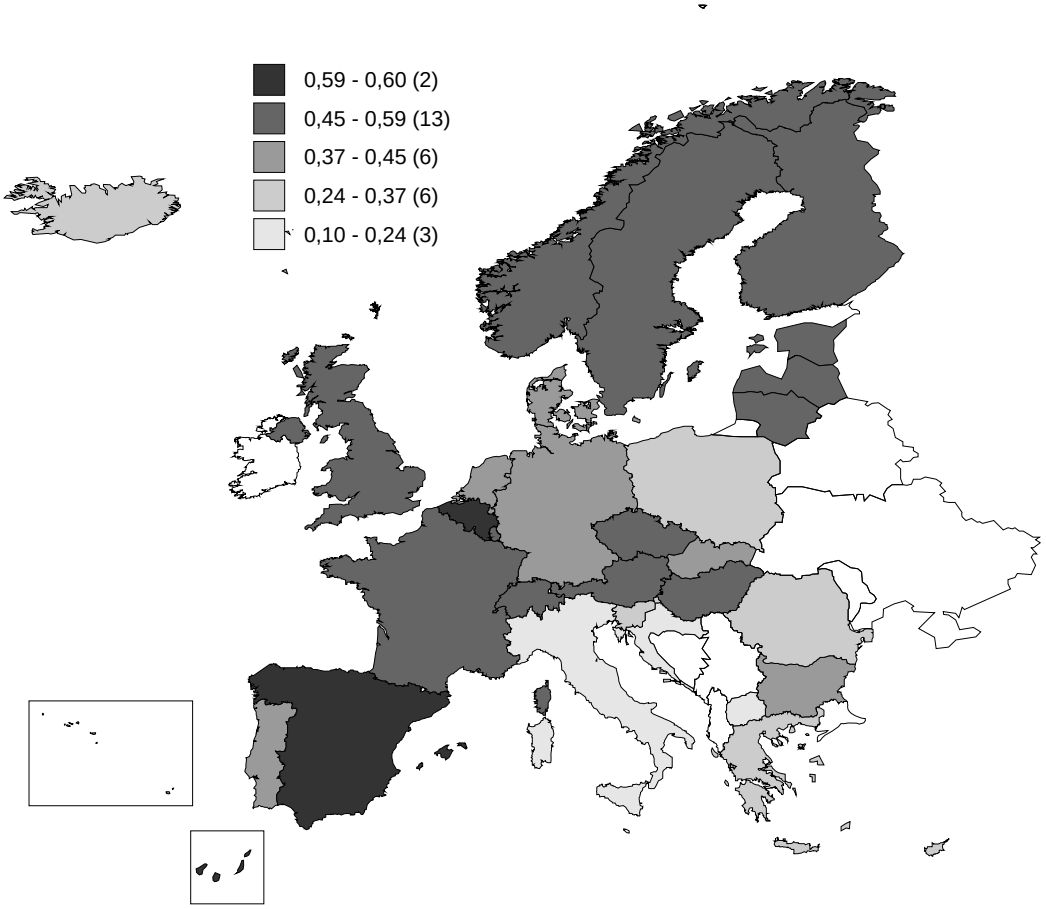
* 3 year moving average centred on reference year.

Data source: Eurostat for the number of divorces by marriage duration between 1980 and 2007 and marriages by marriage cohort between 1950 and 2007.

Interpretation note: The purpose of this figure was not to show country-specific trends but rather how differences between different parts of Europe have become blurred over time despite maintaining large country differences.

Methodological note: The total divorce rate (TDR) is defined as the number of divorces per marriage in a given year. It is calculated by aggregating the marriage-cohort specific proportions of marriages that are dissolved during the given year. As the required divorce data are from 1980 and marriage data from 1950, for the calculation of the 1980 TDR the maximum marriage duration equals 30 years, increasing to 50 years for the divorce cohorts 2000-2007. In addition, as the data source provided a maximum marriage duration of 35+ years, i.e. an open-ended category in which the divorces could not be linked to their corresponding marriage cohorts, they were re-distributed to single-year duration categories. This was done by applying an exponential function where a 50-year marriage duration was chosen as the upper limit and the sum of divorces after 35, 36, …, 49 and 50 years of marriage approximated the published total number of divorces after 35+ years of marriage. Estimations were also made when divorce data were missing for certain single-year marriage duration categories, usually by linear interpolation or by applying duration-specific proportions from adjacent years.

Figure 2. Total divorce rate, 2007



For data source and methodology, see Figure 1.

Some inconsistencies in the concept of the Second Demographic Transition

While the aforementioned between-country differences and time changes in family formation and dissolution personify the SDT, it is nevertheless a complex phenomenon to study as there are numerous intervening factors that play a role, causing for instance, a lack of homogeneity within countries between secularised and non-secularlised regions or between different socioeconomic status groups (Van de Kaa, 2002; Sobotka, 2008). Another concern is the coherence of the SDT as a concept as phenomenon of what is supposed to be new is in fact not so new. For instance, in pre-industrial Europe, i.e. even before the first demographic transition, some social and individual characteristics of the SDT such as divorce was considered acceptable, while below-replacement fertility was first achieved in Western Europe in the 1930s (Coleman, 2004). Similarly, as Coleman (2004) points out, empirical evidence is often contradictory to the theoretical expectations of the SDT theory. Examples include current populations with high rates of non-traditional living arrangements but also high fertility (e.g. northern Europe); societies that today still exhibit traditional attitudes towards sexual relationships, living arrangements and divorce but observe low fertility (e.g. most of southern Europe); or poor (Baltic) countries with higher proportions of births outside

marriage than in more prosperous "post-materialist" and westernised Central European countries like for instance the Czech Republic. Despite these observed inconsistencies, the authors of this paper consider the SDT as a useful interpretative framework of recent changes and current country differences in the field of divorce prevalence and post-divorce trajectories in Europe.

Changing divorce legislation and its effect on divorce rates

In the analysis of divorce rates and post-divorce trajectories one cannot ignore the influence of changing legislation. Divorce was relatively uncommon in Europe until modern times, in contrast to Japan, the Muslim world and polygamous Africa. As summarised by Eurostat (2003, Table 5.1), the oldest regulations in Europe were made in Iceland, where divorce has been possible since the 16th century. In France divorce was introduced in 1791, in Luxembourg in 1794 and in the 19th century in most other Scandinavian and western European countries. During the first half of the 20th century divorce was made possible in much of central and eastern Europe, while in Cyprus (1966), Italy (1970), Liechtenstein (1974), Portugal (1975), Scotland (1976), Spain (1981 and briefly from 1932 to 1939) and Ireland (1995), divorce only became legal since relatively recently. Finally, divorce is still illegal in Malta and the Vatican City although in the former country separation and annulment are available under the Civil Code and Marriage Act, respectively.

In most instances the initial legalisation of divorce only allowed divorce on the basis of ''fault'' (which typically included adultery and physical violence), whereby under a 'fault' 'regime, a divorce could only be granted to the innocent party if he/she presents proof of fault in court, although some countries (mostly in Scandinavia) also allowed divorce after a certain separation period. However, since the 1960s many countries have introduced reforms that facilitated divorce, including abolishing the required proof of fault or mutual consent (i.e. allowing "unilateral" divorce; González and Viitanen 2009). Recently, in 2001, a new form of marriage dissolution termed 'lightning divorce' was also made possible in the Netherlands, while similar steps to speed up the divorce process were taken in 2005 in France and Spain.

But although divorce is allowed in virtually all European countries, a harmonisation of family law within Europe is still absent (although its development is currently being studied; Boele-Woelki 2005). While permissive legislation has contributed to the 'normalisation' of divorce, there are therefore large variations in specific requirements for divorce. For instance, in some European countries divorce is still rather difficult to obtain by not allowing divorce by mutual

consent (e.g. Portugal[1]) or a specified period of legal separation is still stipulated as a precondition or an alternative to full-fledge divorce (e.g. in Ireland and Italy) (Sobotka and Toulemon 2008; González and Viitanen 2009; http://ec.europa.eu/civiljustice/divorce/divorce_gen_en.htm).

Not surprisingly, the legalisation and facilitation of divorce has contributed to the rise in divorce rates in Europe. In the case of the introduction of "no-fault" divorce this is because it reduces the financial costs of obtaining a divorce by removing the requirement of presenting proof of fault in court. According to the study by González and Viitanen (2009) on the effect of divorce laws on divorce rates in 18 European countries that used panel data spanning from 1950 to 2003, the legalisation of divorce, the introduction of "no fault" grounds and unilateral divorce all increased divorce rates significantly. Effects on the divorce rate appeared to be permanent after divorce became legal and after the introduction of "no-fault" divorce legislation, while the effect of unilateral divorce on the divorce rate was temporary, a result that was similar to that found by Wolfers (2006) for the US (where its effect fades out within a decade). Results remained robust after accounting for country and time differences in total fertility, unemployment and female labour force participation rates.

Besides that changing divorce legislation has an impact on the incidence of divorce, it also has repercussions for the main topics of this study: remarriage rates, which declines when unilateral divorce is legalised (Rasul, 2006) and post-divorce fertility rates, which will be low if repartnering or remarriage is legally forbidden or socially discouraged (Burch 1983)[2]. On the other hand, according to Alesina and Giuliano (2007) when unilateral (i.e. easier) divorce laws were introduced in US states marriages rates actually increased and marital fertility remained stable while out-of-wedlock fertility declined as women who planned to have

[1] Although a decision can be taken by the civil registrar if both spouses agree to obtain a divorce.

[2] Research has shown that fertility is lower for women who have experienced a divorce compared to the continually married (Lauriat 1969; Cohen and Sweet 1974; Thornton 1978; Downing and Yaukey 1979; Li 2006). In fact, Thornton (1978) found that fertility declined even in the two years before marital separation. One important reason for the lower fertility among those who have experienced a divorce is because union dissolution leads to periods of little or no sexual activity, thus reducing the risk of pregnancy (Burch 1983). Remarriage or repartnering, however, does not completely restore women's reduced fertility. While the risk of birth is elevated for couples without shared children or if either partner is childless (Vikat et al. 1999, Buber and Prskawetz 2000, Thomson et al. 2002) the presence of more than one stepchild is what decreases fertility in marriages and cohabitations (Li 2006). According to Li (2006) women who experience a non-traditional family trajectory involving stepfamily are confronted with a "fertility penalty" as they are projected to have lower completed cohort fertility due to the diminishing pattern at the early stage of fertility schedules for their first marital births as marital stability is lower. However, for stepfamilies that survive and move on to have their second and higher-order shared births in the marriage, levels and timing of fertility are identical to those of intact families. This is in part because child spacing in stepfamilies is about half (one-and-a-half years) than it is in intact families as women may be motivated to compensate for their lost reproductive time in the process of marital disruption and reconstitution (Li 2006) or to minimise the age difference between half siblings (Thomson et al. 2002).

children married with greater ease, perhaps because they knew that the "exit option" from marriage had become a lot simpler.

Study objective, data and methodology

The objective of this paper is to analyse post-divorce trajectories in Europe. We do this by performing an in-depth study on repartnering (including non-marital unions) and reparenting using the Fertility and Family Survey (FFS), supported by data from Eurostat (the Statistical Office of the European Communities) for the description of recent trends in remarriage. Eurostat disseminate data through the New Cronos database which is frequently updated and can be consulted freely on the Eurostat's website http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat[3]. As the Eurostat data were not always complete (this depended largely on the availability of data from the relevant National Statistical Institutes who are responsible for the transmission of the data to Eurostat) other data sources were also consulted for the construction of a number of indicators such as webpages of national statistics institutes (see also the notes below Figure 1). Remarriage trends for up to 30 European countries are presented: 25 of the 27 countries of the European Union (EU27) (as divorce is still illegal in Malta and was only legalised in Ireland in 1995), Croatia and Macedonia (two EU candidates) and three of the four EFTA countries (Iceland, Norway and Switzerland as no sufficient data could be obtained for Liechtenstein).

The FFS was used to estimate survival functions of entering into a new partnership and new parenthood after experiencing one's first union dissolution, as well as the odds for legally divorced and separated respondents of entering into a new partnership in 9 or 10 European countries, depending on the indicator (see Table 1 for sample characteristics). Fertility and Family surveys were generally conducted in the early 1990s in selected Member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). It was co-ordinated by their Population Activities Unit (PAU) and largely financed by the United Nations[4]. The initiative for this survey came about because of the shifts in partnership and reproductive behaviour patterns that had taken place over much of Europe and North America since the 1960s. Such shifts include the postponement of, and decline in, first marriage along with the increase in

[3] For detailed information on the methodology for the calculation of Eurostat's demographic indicators, see Calot and Sardon (2004). See http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_SDDS/EN/demo_base.htm for associated documentation (metadata) on data coverage (characteristics), integrity (transparency of practices and procedures), quality (information the user needs to assess data quality) and dissemination formats of the demographic data. Specific concepts, definitions and classifications and other data issues (scope, reference and base period and data processing) regarding the population, marriage and divorce indicators can be obtained from http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_SDDS/en/demo_pop_esms.htm and http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_SDDS/en/demo_nup_sm1.htm, respectively.

[4] See also http://www.unece.org/pau/ffs/ffs.htm.

divorce and non-marital cohabitation and the postponement of parenthood as well as the increase in extra- marital childbearing and childlessness. One important outcome was the emergence of a plurality of living arrangements and family forms, including one-parent and reconstituted families. However, while changes in partnership and reproductive behaviour have mostly been documented using data from population census, vital registration and/or population registers, they lack depth and breadth (as they do not account for entire individual relationship and family histories and their characteristics), as well as comparability across countries. On the other hand, FFS data can be used to calculate family transitions using standard demographic analysis like life table analysis (e.g. Andersson and Philipov 2002) and hazard rate regression (e.g. Lappegard et al. 2009). For the purpose of this article, it basically allows for the separation between the moment of union dissolution and events that occur afterwards whereby the survival functions and probabilities of the transitions to new relationships and new maternities and paternities according to different types of post-divorce living arrangements can be estimated.

There are, however, several drawbacks of using the FFS for the study of union dissolution and post-union dissolution trajectories. For instance, only adults until the age of about 50 were interviewed and included more women than men (and in some countries men were not interviewed at all). Additionally, while country-specific sample sizes are acceptable (between 1700 and 6000 depending on the country) this is reduced substantially if only respondents who have experienced a union dissolution are considered and more so if this pertains to a legal divorce or (de facto) separation which impedes a very detailed analysis of post-separation and -divorce trajectories (Table 1). In addition, as most of the surveys were conducted in the 1990s, results do not fully reflect actual patterns of post-dissolution living arrangements. This is particularly the case for Central and Eastern Europe where the FFS illustrates the household and family patterns that prevailed in the late stages of state socialism, i.e. before 1990, and thus don't capture the rapid transformation in living arrangements in the 1990s (Sobotka and Toulemon (2008).

Finally, reasons for the observed international differences in repartnering and parenthood probabilities after separation or divorce will be discussed in the final section of the paper that will be aided by the results from a regression analysis conducted on a series of associated contextual variables.

Table 1. FFS sample characteristics of respondents who have experienced a union break-up.

	Sample 1			Type of 1st union (%)				Post-1st union (%)				Sample 2	
	1+ union break-ups			Marriage		consensual		Repartnering		Reparenting		Divorced/Separated	
Country, year	Total	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀
Austria, 1995-96	1255	309	946	25	36	75	64	57	47	28	29	94	414
Belgium, 1991-92	574	239	335	63	67	37	33	56	53	42	32	124	191
Czech Republic, 1997	434	109*	325	46	55	54	45	83	63	36	42	27*	159
Estonia, 1994	789	266	523	28	28	72	72	70	67	32	31	113#	209#
Finland, 1989-90	1251	362	889	26	39	74	61	68	58	29	34	133	472
France, 1994	1569	526	1043	25	40	75	60	65	51	26	29	211	528
Germany, 1992	1641	562	1079	25	37	75	63	59	53	36	39	207	544
Hungary, 1992-93	832	265	567	57	69	43	31	61	59	33	28	118	289
Norway, 1988-89	1062	295	767	39	32	61	68	66	56	38	41	111	282
Slovenia, 1994-1995	257	82	175	49	61	51	39	63	65	14	20	49	109
Spain, 1994-95	322	106	216	35	61	65	39	45	41	21	27	34	117
Total Sample (unweighted)	**9986**	**3121**	**6865**	**34**	**43**	**66**	**57**	**63**	**55**	**30**	**32**	**1121**	**3314**

Source: FFS data.
Notes: * The Czech Republic was not further analysed as only those in a relationship at the time of the survey were interviewed; # Estonia was not used in the analysis that only contained divorced and separated respondents as just one divorced/separated woman lived with a new partner.

Results

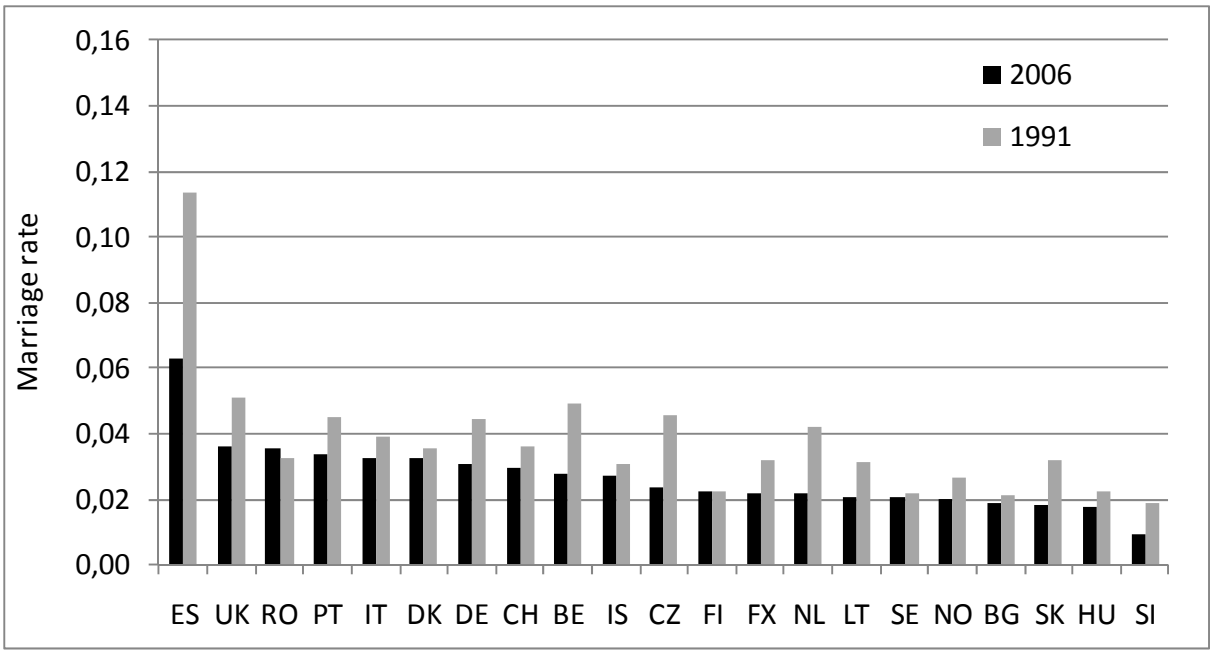
Remarriage and repartnering

As was commented on in the introduction, divorce rates increased almost unilaterally in Europe during the last decades. However, in spite of the fact that more people were divorced, remarriage rates of divorced persons progressively declined in most countries since the early 1980s, and most notably in the 1990s (Figure 3). It would appear from the observed results that the decline was structural as remarriage rates remained higher for men than for women in all countries throughout this period. Similarly, in terms of current geographical differences, highest remarriage rates remain to be observed in predominantly catholic countries as well as in the UK, Germany and Denmark and the lowest rates in Scandinavia and the Baltic countries. It would therefore appear that in countries with traditionally high levels of divorce rates, the divorced population does not necessarily consider remarriage as the preferred repartnering option. However, at the same time that remarriage rates are decreasing, marriages of divorced as a proportion of all marriages and of all second marriages have increased (results not shown). The former can be explained by the fact that overall marriage rates have also declined and because two to three decades ago the divorced population was much smaller or almost non-existent in some countries. This is also one reason why the proportion of remarriages of divorced men and women in relation to the total number of remarriages (i.e. which also includes those of widowed persons) increased. Another reason is because fewer people are becoming widowed at young or middle age as life expectancy continues to rise and at the same time because it has become socially acceptable for divorced persons to remarry. As a result, since the mid-1990s in most Nordic countries as well as in several central and western European countries about 95% of persons who remarry are divorced (although proportions remain slightly higher among men).

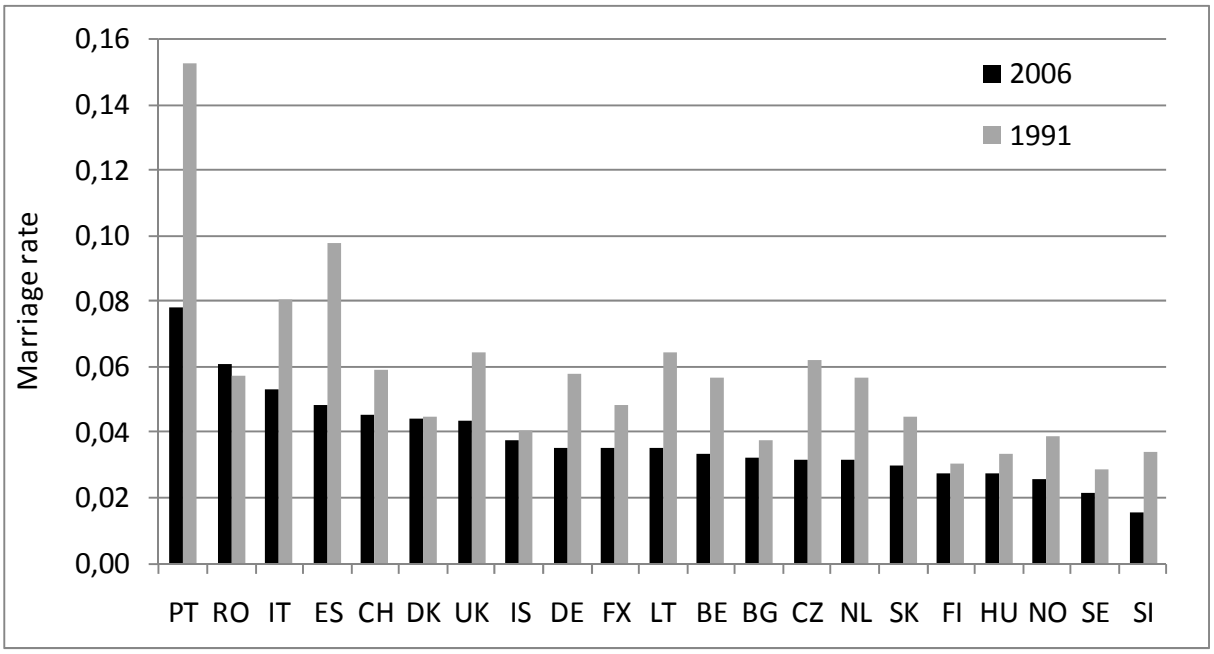
If we would analyse the marital status of the spouses we observe that the majority of divorced men and women who remarry do so with someone who is also divorced (between 50% and 60% of the total), followed by singles (± 40%) and widows (± 5%). While few male-female differences are observed in especially in Belgium, Luxembourg and the Nordic countries, notable exceptions include Spain, Italy and Ireland where both divorced men and divorced women are more likely to remarry singles. Higher proportions are observed for men (Figure 4).

Figure 3. Marriage rates of divorced persons in 1991 and 2006.*

a. Men



b. Women



Data source: Eurostat and websites of national statistical institutes.

Methodological note: Calculated by dividing the number of remarriages of the divorced in relation to the average divorced population for the same year.

*Except for Bulgaria, Spain, Portugal and the United Kingdom (all 2001).

Figure 4a. Marriages of divorced women according to husband's previous marital status, mid-2000s (% of total)

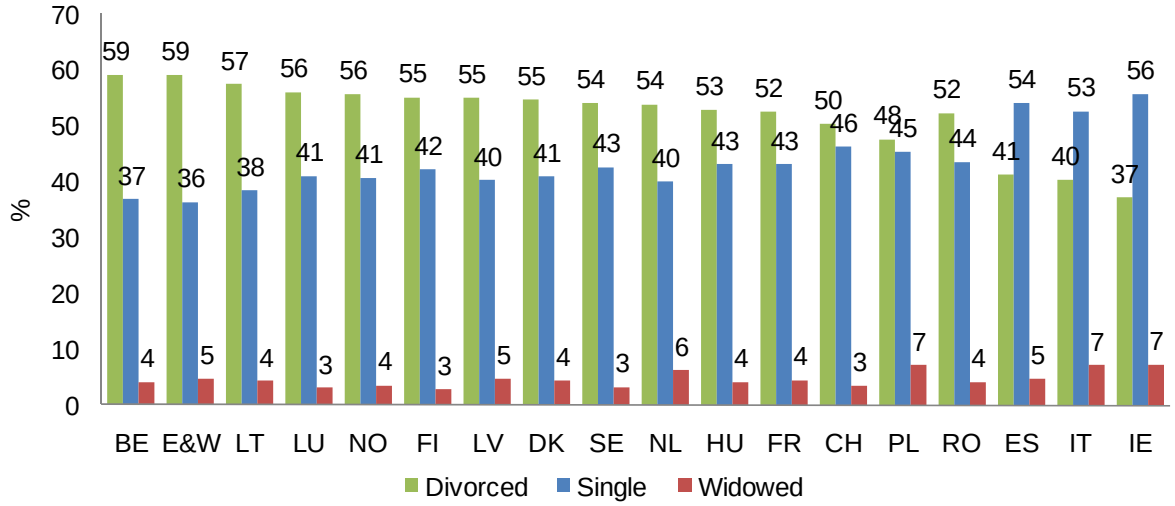
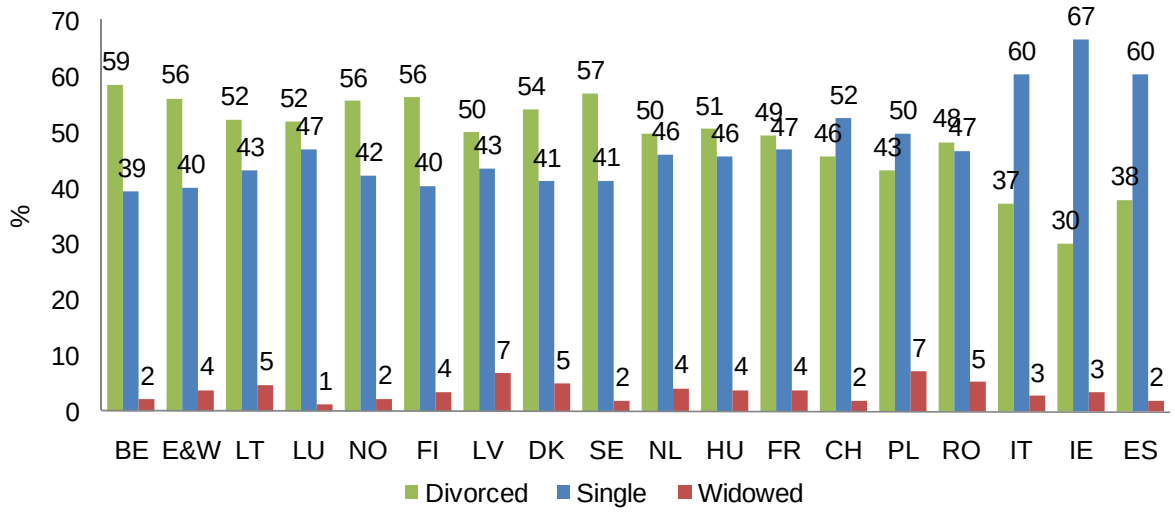


Figure 4b. Marriages of divorced men according to wife's previous marital status, mid-2000s (% of total)



Data source: National statistical institutes (websites and personal communication).

If we would consider the age differences between marrying couples who were both previously divorced, currently more than half of the husbands are older than their wives in the five western and northern European countries for which data could be obtained, while about a third are within the same age category. Results are shown in the Appendix. The proportion older husbands increased to about two-thirds in the two southern European countries Italy and Spain. On the other hand, when divorced men marry single women age differences are larger as over 70% are older according to the criterion that was used and only about 5% are younger. When divorced men marry widows, men are older than their spouses in 32%-45% of newly-weds in northern and western Europe with a similar proportion being of the same age. Wives

are older in the remaining quarter to fifth of remarriages. As regards to Italy and Spain, husbands are older in close to 60% of such marriages. Conversely, when divorced women marry widowers the distribution of age differences is even more skewed as about 60% of the husbands are older. In the two southern European countries this rises to about 80%. Finally, the distribution of age differences is about equal when divorced women marry single men: marriage partners in one-third of all marriages are of approximately the same age, in another third the husbands are older (although 42% in Belgium) and in the remaining third the wives are older.

However, while most data on remarriage from Eurostat and national statistical institutes are recent, cover most European countries and generally a relatively long time span, they originally come from national civil registers which implies several selection biases for the purpose of our study. Firstly, they only pertain to remarriage, not to repartnering in general. Secondly, separated men and women who do not divorce but may repartner are also excluded from the study population as they cannot legally marry. Particularly for countries (or years) where one has to separate for a certain period before being able to divorce, repartnering is likely to be underestimated using official registers. One alternative to overcome these biases is to look at survey data. For our study we therefore chose to use the FFS as it is still the most comprehensive in terms of participating countries and data availability, despite its disadvantages including that not all European countries are represented (see previous section). Another important advantage of the FFS data is the possibility to estimate the probability or odds of entering into a new partnership and analyse the effect of factors that may affect this such as the presence of children, which is what we did for the population who had experienced a relationship break-up.

Results showed that separated and divorced men have a higher odd of living in a partnership than ditto women in each of the participating countries where both men and women were surveyed (Table 2). Although the odds ratio of the total sample equalled 1,52, there were substantial country differences as the odds ratio in Austria almost reached 3, followed by France and Finland (almost 2), while fewest gender differences are found for Hungary, Belgium and Norway (just over 1). In terms of the sex-specific odds, Slovenian and Austrian separated and divorced males are almost as likely to live with a partner as not to live with one, while the lowest odds are observed for Hungary and Germany (respectively 0,40 and 0,45). In the case of women, the odds to live with a partner is about a third for the same countries that observed the highest male female odds ratio as well as Germany and Hungary and about 0,6 for the remaining three (Norway, Belgium and Hungary).

Table 2. Odds of living in partnership among divorced or separated men and women

Country	Men	Women	Odds ratio
Austria, 1995-96	0,81	0,29	2,75
France, 1994	0,56	0,30	1,89
Finland, 1989-90	0,56	0,33	1,71
Germany, 1992	0,45	0,30	1,47
Slovenia, 1994-1995	0,88	0,63	1,41
Spain, 1994-1995	0,55	0,41	1,33
Norway, 1988-89	0,68	0,58	1,18
Belgium, 1991-92	0,65	0,57	1,16
Hungary, 1992-93	0,40	0,36	1,13
Sample average	**0,49**	**0,32**	**1,52**

Source: FFS data (own calculations).

There are, of course, factors that affect the chance of a divorced or separated person to step into a new relationship that could explain these observed gender differences. If we would consider for instance the presence or not of children in the household of a divorced or separated person (Table 3) we observe that the overall odds to live with a partner remains at just over a third for women irrespective of the presence of children but is halved (from 0,57 to 0,29) for men when no children are present[5]. These are lower odds than for women, but when children are present the odds are multiplied by three (with the male:female odds ratio rising to 4,77). Odds to live with a partner are reduced the most if a separated or divorced male lives with (a) parent(s), with about the same odds being observed for ditto women (0,13 and 0,15, respectively), although the odds are only slightly reduced in the case of men if, at the same time, there are also children present. On the other hand, not living with parents provokes a slightly higher than average risk of living with a new partner among separated or divorced men (and especially if they also live with children) but without much effect for women. However, one reason why the odds of being in a relationship when there are children present is higher for divorced males than that for divorced females is because a significant proportion of these children are step children (45% in the case of divorced men vs. 6% for divorced women). In addition, as divorced or separated women tend to have the custody over children, the fact that being a parent is a known disincentive for entering into a new relationship for both divorcees and potential partners affects women more than men (e.g. Lampard and Peggs (1999), Sweeney (1997) and Uhlenberg (1989)).

[5] It should be mentioned that no country-specific analyses were performed here due to a lack of sample size for the majority of countries in the FFS samples.

Table 3. Odds of living with partner with and without other types of household members

Odds of respondent to live with partner	M	F	Odds ratio	< 10 cases in at least 1 cell
Overall	0,57	0,36	**1,58**	No
For those who don't live with children	0,29	0,38	**0,76**	No
For those who live with children	1,70	0,36	**4,77**	No
For those who don't live with parents	0,64	0,37	**1,71**	No
For those who live with parents	0,13	0,15	**0,85**	No
For those who don't live with children nor parents	0,33	0,41	**0,81**	No
For those who don't live with children but with parents	0,08	0,07	**1,25**	Si
For those who live with children but not with parents	1,80	0,37	**4,90**	No
For those who live with children and parents	0,50	0,18	**2,81**	Si

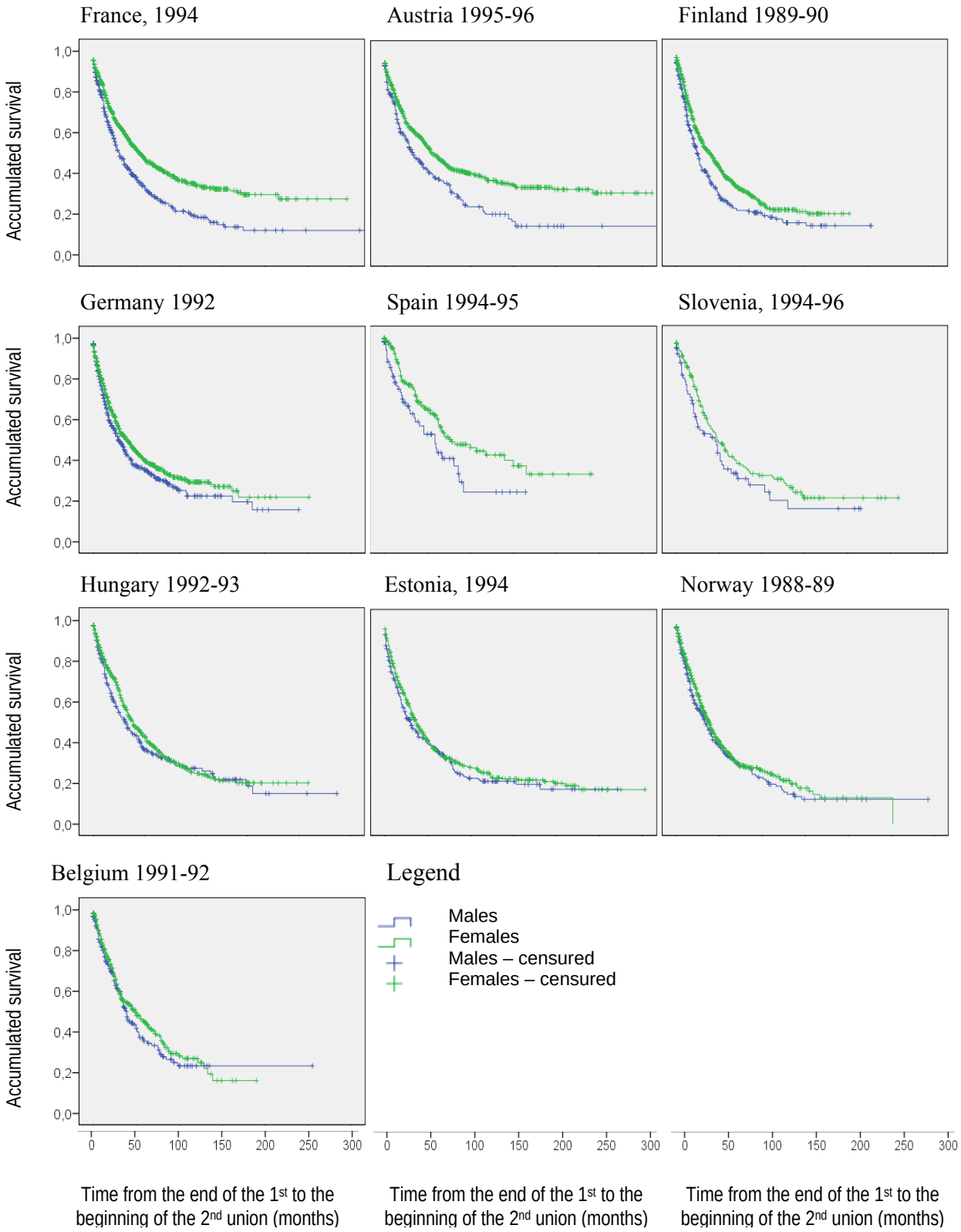
Source: FFS data (own calculations).

Besides the fact that men are more prone to start a new relationship after a union break-up, they also tend to enter a new union at a faster rate than women (e.g. Wu and Schimmele, 2005). One way to verify this is by conducting survival function analyses on the same FFS data (Figure 6) and performing an equality test on the survival function distributions to ascertain if any observed sex differences are statistical different (Table 4). In this case all those who experienced a relationship break-up are used, i.e. not only those who are legally separated or divorced (see Table 1). As the results show, the same countries that previously showed the highest odds ratios of living in a partnership among divorced and separated persons observe a faster rate of entering into a new union among men. Meanwhile, in Slovenia, Hungary, Estonia (not previously analysed), Norway and Belgium, men and women enter equally quickly into a new relationship.

Besides sex, we know that age, type of first union and the presence of own children are other key determinants in the probability and speed of entering a new union. We therefore also estimated for these variables differences in survival functions from the time between the end of the first union to the start of the second. Rather than displaying the results in the form of graphs, we provide the results from the equality tests in Table 4 and the median duration times and standard errors in Table 5.

Regarding the type of first union we distinguished between marriage and consensual union. Results showed that only in Finland, France, Austria and Germany persons whose first union was a marriage were less likely to form a second union than those who were previously in a consensual union. In the other countries, no statistical differences could be discerned. In all countries 50% of respondents whose first union was consensual were in a new relationship

Figure 6. Survival functions from the end of the first union to the beginning of a second by sex



Source: FFS data (own calculations).

within 3 years, with the exception of Spain where the median was 5 years. Second unions after marriage occurred between about 33 months (Estonia) and 6,5 years (Austria).

If we would consider the influence of age on the time it takes to repartner after a first union break-up, we observe that there are significant differences between those who where younger than 25 years of age and those older at the time of the end of the first union in all but Belgium and Slovenia. Overall, 50% of the younger respondents in the 10 European countries were in a new relationship within 3 years after dissolution of the first compared to 5,5 years for those older than the age of 25.

Lastly, the effect of own children on the probability and timing of entering into a second union was also analysed. Results showed that in all but Estonia those who had no children from their first relationship started a new relationship significantly quicker on average than parents did: in most countries 50% within 2 years while for those with children from their first relationship half were in a relationship after about 3-5 years (in Austria and Spain 6 years or more).

Table 4. Mantel-Cox Log Rank Equality Test between sex, 1st union type (married vs. consensual union), age differences (<25 vs. 25+) and being a parent (no vs. yes) in the survival functions of the end of the first union to the beginning of a second union.

Country	**Sex** **Chi²**		**1st union type** **Chi²**		**Age** **Chi²**		**Parent** **Chi²**	
Austria 1995-96	17,59	*	23,33	*	49,55	*	82,07	*
Belgium, 1991-92	1,22		1,26		1,85		22,00	*
Estonia, 1994	1,67		0,01		18,08	*	0,73	
Finland, 1989-90	14,69	*	25,89	*	55,80	*	101,03	*
France, 1994	36,65	*	25,89	*	63,73	*	136,37	*
Germany, 1992	6,11	*	8,39	*	41,32	*	76,70	*
Hungary, 1992-93	1,85		2,10		19,85	*	56,89	*
Norway, 1988-89	1,70		0,28		6,31	*	36,64	*
Slovenia, 1994-1995	2,13		1,59		1,30		7,55	*
Spain, 1994-95	5,59	*	2,48		14,83	*	16,28	*

Source: FFS data (own calculations). * Significant at p< 0,05.

Table 5. Median time and standard error (SE) in months from end of 1st to beginning of 2nd union by sex, 1st union type, age and being a parent.

	Sex				1st union type				Age				Parent from 1st unión			
	Males		Females		Married		Consensual		Under 25		25+		No		Yes	
	Median	SE	Median	SE	Median	SE	Median	SE	Median	SE	Median	SE	Median	SE	Median	SE
Austria 1995-96	33	5,3	56	4,6	76	11,2	37	4,4	29	3,7	74	10,6	20	1,9	76	10,1
Belgium, 1991-92	39	2,9	49	7,5	46	5,1	33	7,6	39	5,5	45	6,9	25	2,4	53	8,8
Estonia, 1994	30	4,2	37	2,9	33	5,0	34	2,6	30	3,0	39	3,9	37	5,4	33	2,7
Finland, 1989-90	32	2,3	52	3,7	63	5,2	35	2,2	31	1,9	59	3,7	26	1,9	62	4,4
France, 1994	30	2,3	54	4,2	63	6,4	38	2,4	27	2,2	62	5,2	17	2,1	63	4,9
Germany, 1992	29	2,7	39	3,0	45	6,3	31	2,0	26	1,8	50	4,9	15	1,6	38	3,3
Hungary, 1992-93	31	4,0	39	3,0	37	2,7	32	3,9	30	2,0	44	4,9	22	2,8	42	3,4
Norway, 1988-89	34	3,7	38	2,2	36	2,6	38	2,4	33	2,8	40	3,5	26	2,8	39	2,4
Slovenia, 1994-1995	45	11,4	47	6,8	53	5,1	33	8,9	46	4,7	47	13,1	24	1,8	53	4,6
Spain, 1994-95	59	10,2	78	16,4	70	9,6	63	14,2	43	10,1	86	–	22	10,7	81	8,9

Source: FFS data (own calculations). ***** Significant at p< 0,05. # – transition took place in less than half of the cases. – SE could not be calculated.

Post first-union parenthood

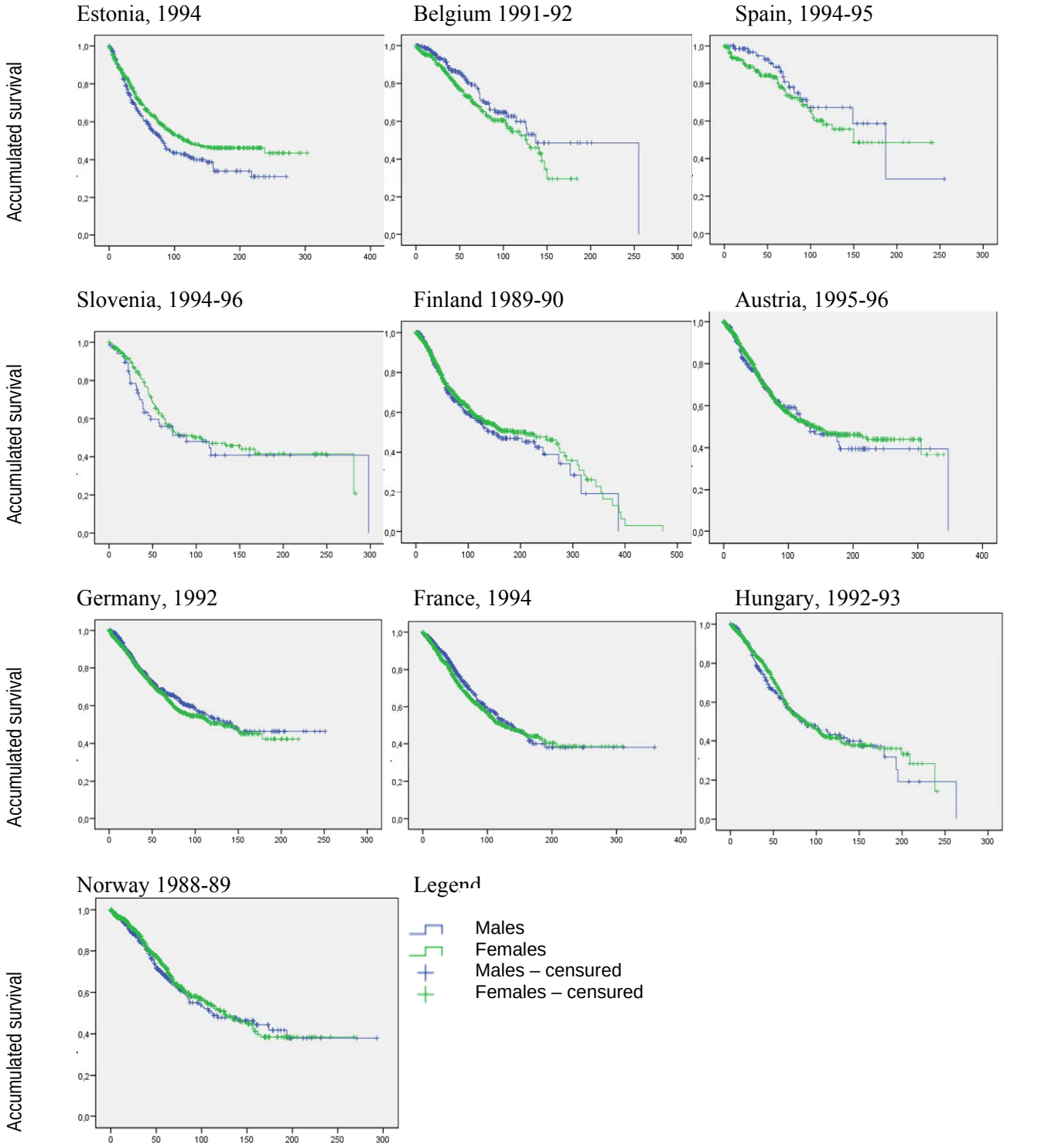
In a similar way that entering into new unions was analysed, it is possible to calculate survival functions of the time from the end of the first union to new parenthood. As results in Figure7 and Table 6 show, gender differences in new parenthood after the dissolution of the first union are most apparent in Estonia, are less important in Belgium, Spain and Slovenia (where in Belgium and Spain maternities actually occur faster, although not statistically significantly), and almost no gender differences could be ascertained for the remaining countries. As to the timing of new parenthood, in most countries about half had become parents ten years (120 months) after the end of the first union, although this occurs earlier for Estonian and later for Spanish men (Table 7).

With regard to the effect of the type of first union on post-first union parenthood, similar results were observed as previously for entry into a second union. In addition to the countries that observed differences in the former analysis, Norway and Spain can also be added, although it is obvious that it takes longer to become a parent (in fact, in Austria, more than half of the formally married never become new parents).

In terms of the difference in entry into new parenthood between the younger (up to 25 years of age) and older (25+) respondents we observe that there are significant differences in all but Belgium and Slovenia and in age groups it took about three times as long as entering into a new relationship. Perhaps as a result of this, fewer than 50% of the older age group had children after a first-union break-up in Austria, Estonia, Germany and Hungary.

Finally, as to the effect of own children on the probability of new parenthood after the dissolution of the first union, results are similar (although of course with substantially higher medians) than was observed for starting a new relationship as again only in Estonia no significant difference was ascertained. If we would ignore the result for Estonia, it took for the first 50% of those who had no children fruit of their first union between a maximum of 6 (Austria) and 9 (France) years to become parents, while for those who did have children the median was between about 13 years in Hungary and 19 years in Norway. Not surprisingly, the survival analyses showed that a large proportion of respondents who had had children from their first union did not end up having children again (not shown).

Figure 7. Survival functions from the end of the first union to new parenthood by sex



Source: FFS data (own calculations).

Table 6. Mantel-Cox Log Rank Equality Test between sex, 1st union type (married vs. consensual union), age differences (<25 vs. 25+) and being a parent (no vs. yes) in the survival functions of the end of the first union to new parenthood.

Country	Sex Chi²		1st union type Chi²		Age Chi²		Parent Chi²	
Austria 1995-96	4,92	*	27,47	*	57,79	*	91,51	*
Belgium, 1991-92	0,75		7,00	*	0,05		17,62	*
Estonia, 1994	0,20		1,37		42,66	*	1,13	
Finland, 1989-90	0,05		30,18	*	49,57	*	116,92	*
France, 1994	0,02		14,14	*	24,51	*	40,89	*
Germany, 1992	0,55		21,68	*	41,34	*	41,02	*
Hungary, 1992-93	1,38		0,09		12,32	*	31,11	*
Norway, 1988-89	0,29		24,89	*	26,36	*	32,78	*
Slovenia, 1994-1995	1,08		0,55		1,68		8,39	*
Spain, 1994-95	0,00		10,90	*	19,54	*	17,65	*

Source: FFS data (own calculations). * Significant at p< 0,05.

Tentative explanations for delays in post-first union relationships and parenthood.

As far as the authors are aware of, the literature on the second demographic transition is not specific on factors that determine the timing of second unions and new parenthood. However, we think that the same factors that are responsible for the SDT indicators, which include the postponement of first marriage and childbearing, are also associated with longer periods between the end of the first union and the establishment of a second one as well as post-first-union parenthood. To test this hypothesis we used ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to examine the statistical associations between the two previously mentioned post-union dissolution outcomes and the SDT indicators female labour force participation, youth unemployment, the proportion of women who attained a post-secondary degree and who are part-timers in the workforce. In addition, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (as a proxy of advancements and use of methods of birth-control) and the year when divorce was legalised (as a measure of the cultural acceptance of divorce) were tested. [6] With the obvious exception of the last-named variable, the exogenous data pertain to the same (or as close as possible) year as when the FFS survey was held. The data sources and descriptive statistics of both the dependent and independent variables are provided in Table 8. For the multivariate regression analysis the stepwise technique was employed and results are provided in Table 9.

[6] An attempt was made to obtain information on the exact years when no-fault and unilateral divorce became legal in each of the countries in the analysis where such law change has been made, but this has not been possible.

Table 7. Median time and standard error (SE) in months from end of 1st union to new parenthood by sex, 1st union type, age and being a parent.

	Sex				1st union type				Age				Parent from 1st union			
	Males		Females		Married		Consensual		Under 25		25+		No		Yes	
	Median	SE	Median	SE	Median	SE	Median	SE	Median	SE	Median	SE	Median	SE	Median	SE
Austria 1995-96	128	10,4	155	16,6	#		117	11,2	91	7,9	#		72	4,8	#	
Belgium, 1991-92	127	24,7	106	13,9	127	16,4	79	6,5	110	19,2	98		80	8,7	150	17,4
Estonia, 1994	218	33,4	156	14,9	134	25,8	163	19,9	106	9,5	#		260	68,7	159	18,9
Finland, 1989-90	151	10,4	152	9,3	197	24,0	125	8,3	118	8,2	228	21,0	102	3,4	228	15,3
France, 1994	133	12,3	140	7,6	158	10,6	121	5,8	115	5,1	170	10,7	107	5,7	164	12,9
Germany, 1992	96	7,8	104	9,1	148	10,3	85	3,8	82	4,4	#		83	4,0	157	15,0
Hungary, 1992-93	134	18,8	109	6,3	113	7,6	106	12,2	99	6,5	#		83	4,5	134	18,0
Norway, 1988-89	144	22,4	113	6,1	167	28,9	90	5,0	86	5,4	165	14,4	83	4,3	214	33,5
Slovenia, 1994-1995	106	22,9	137	21,4	136	19,7	118	28,0	111	19,5	182	37,1	99	10,1	159	29,6
Spain, 1994-95	162	18,8	162	24,1	162	16,0	111	11,8	92	12,0	184	19,3	81	12,1	184	19,2

Source: FFS data (own calculations). * Significant at p< 0,05. # – transition took place in less than half of the cases. – SE could not be calculated.

The models appeared to explain the cross-country variation in repartnering and post-first union parenthood well (respectively, 55% and 67%). Results from the first analysis shows that youth unemployment and GDP were the only two variables that significantly explained the country variation in the timing of second unions. The signs of the association of the two variables are as expected: both youth unemployment and increased welfare augment the median time it takes for first-time divorced and separated (from marriage or consensual union) women to repartner. It is thus interesting to note that the time when divorce became legal has no significant impact on the differential timing of second unions between the countries studied.

As to the second analysis, it was a-priori assumed that having entered a new relationship is a major determinant of post-first-union parenthood. It was therefore decided that the dependent variable of the first analysis would serve as one of the tested explanatory variables in the analysis of post-first-union parenthood. Indeed, its importance was demonstrated by the fact that it was the first variable considered by the modelling procedure, explaining 28% of the country variation in the median duration of post-first union parenthood, and their close association can also observed in Figure 8. Besides second unions, labour force participation and tertiary education also influence post-first union parenthood and in all three instances, the association is positive, i.e. the longer women take to enter a new union and the more that they work and the higher the level of education they have, the longer it takes for them to have children (if they decide to have them at all). Indeed, part of the non-linearity of the association between the median time to repartnering and the median time to reparenting is explained by the two socioeconomic factors (see differences between Figures 8 and 9), i.e. it explains why in some countries a short median delay in repartnering after a first union dissolution can be observed but a long median delay in reparenting (e.g. Estonia).

Table 8. Overview of variables used in the regression analysis, their sources and descriptive statistics

Variable	Abbrev.	Source	N	Min.	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Median time (months) from end of 1st to beginning of 2nd union	Union2f	(1)	10	37,00	78,00	48,90	12,44
Median time (months) from end of 1st to new parenthood	Parenth2f	(1)	10	104,00	162,00	133,40	23,15
Legalisation of divorce (year)	Divlawyr	(2)	10	1791,00	1981,00	1887,40	53,82
GDP (Purchasing Power Parities)	GDP	(3)	10	5506,94	18383,29	14236,75	5048,64
Female labour force activity (%)	LFAf	(4)	10	48,87	76,55	64,74	9,08
Youth unemployment (%)	Unempyth	(4)	10	5,97	40,45	16,88	10,85
Female share of part-timers (%)	PartimeFp	(4)	10	45,50	88,80	74,21	13,34
Post-secondary completed (% F 25+)	Edu_uni	(5)	10	4,40	11,50	6,98	2,22

(1) FFS; (2) Eurostat (2003); (3) Groningen Growth and Development Centre (2005); (4) ILO (2010); (5) Barro and Lee (2000).

Table 9. Regression analysis results of the length of time (months) between the end of the first union to the beginning of the second and new parenthood. Women only.

Variable	2nd union		Post 1st union parenthood	
	b	p-value	*B*	p-value
Unempyth	0,916	0,011		
Ln of GDP	14,205	0,069		
Union2f			2,278	0,004
LFAf			1,671	0,029
Edu_uni			5,656	0,058
Constant	-101,328	0,159	-125,673	0,096
N	10		10	
Adjusted R^2	0,550		0,667	
Durbin-Watson	1,650		2,603	

Notes: Data sources: see Table 8; None of the variables showed a zero-order correlation of more than 0.8 with any other individual variable (results can be obtained upon request). While regressor variables may still show severe multicollinearity in the regression analysis, a condition that complicates estimating the separate effects of each variable, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) statistic showed that this was not the case.[7] GDP was logged given the likelihood of diminishing effects with increasing welfare (although it made little difference to the final model outcomes). Partial regression plots of the other dependent variables did not reveal the need for additional transformations and neither did analysis on the model residuals. Given the small sample size, only the significant ($p<0,1$) variables were considered rather than one that contained all tested variables.

[7] VIFs represent the inflation that each regression coefficient experiences above ideal, i.e. above what would be experienced if the correlation matrix were an identity matrix. The VIF-score will be quite large if the regressor variable has a strong linear association with the remaining regressors and thus supplies the user with an indication of which coefficients are adversely affected and to what extent. While there is no rule of thumb, there is reason for some concern if a VIF-score exceeds 10, in which case one should consider variable deletion to combat the problem (see also Myers, 1990). The highest score in our analysis was 1,951.

Figure 8. Median duration to repartnering vs. reparenting after the dissolution of the first union.

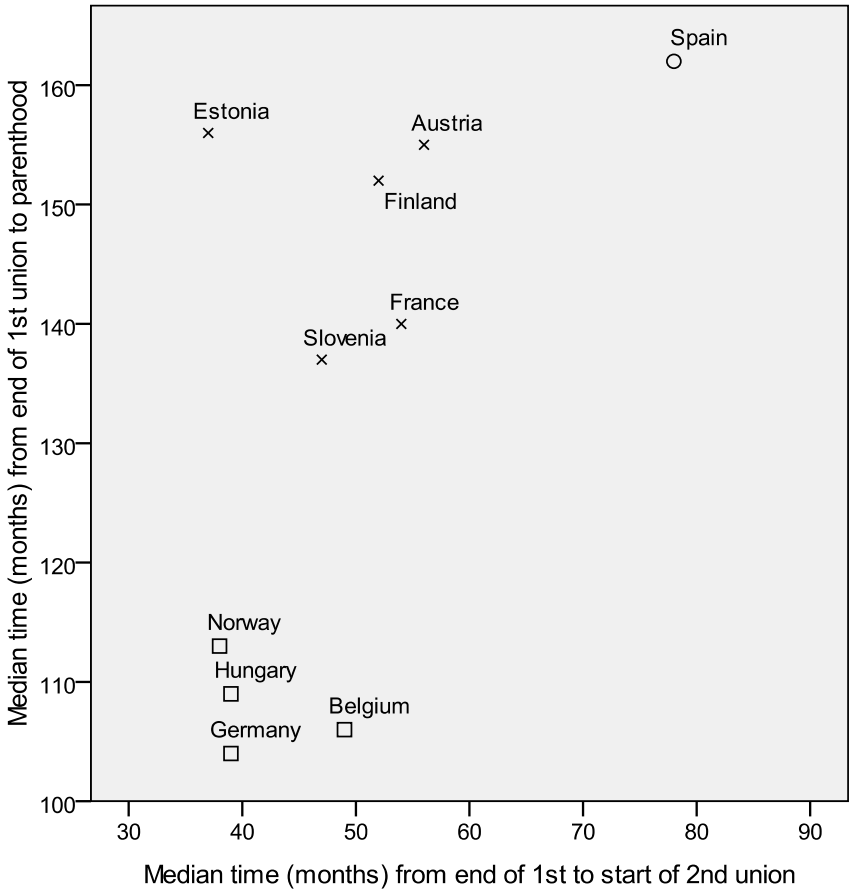
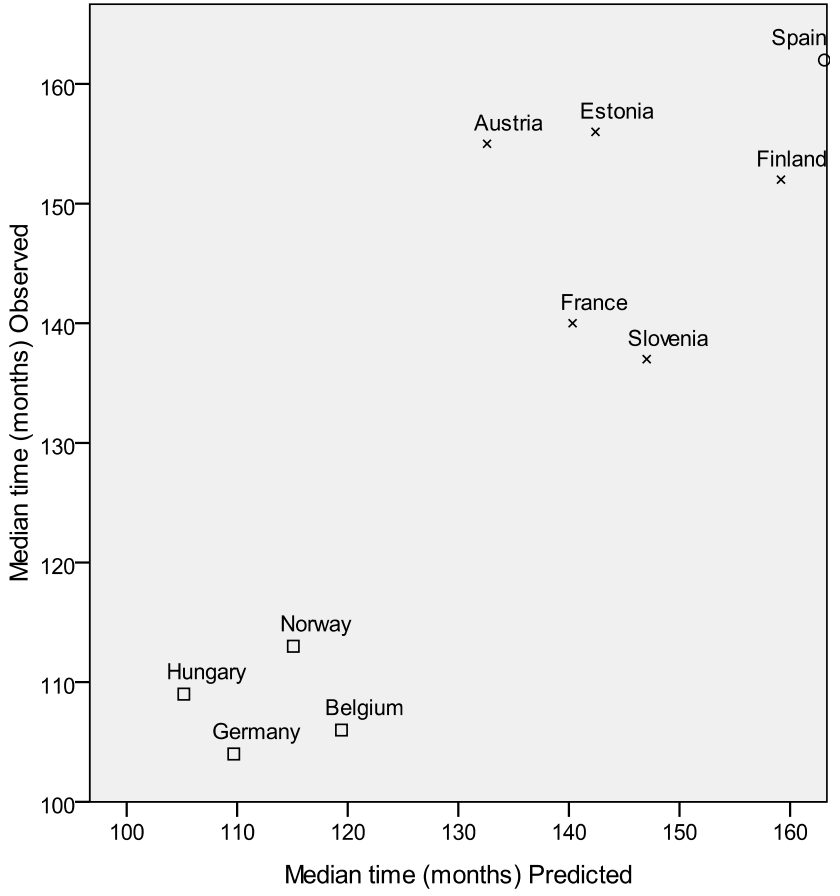


Figure 9. Median duration to reparenting: Observed vs predicted values after controlling for repartnering, female labour force activity and the proportion of women with post-secondary school education.



Data sources: See table 8.

Summary and conclusion

In this article we started by analysing country and time differences in the total divorce rate, i.e. the mean number of divorces per marriage in a given calendar year, an indicator that is sensitive to economic, social and legislative changes. We particularly saw this for Eastern European countries in the 1990s and in Spain after divorce was legalised in 1981 and liberalised in 2005. However, while the south is "catching up" on the behavioural patterns of the Nordic countries, north-south differences still exist, with western, central and eastern European countries usually taking on a position in the middle. Exceptions to the latter include "Catholic Poland" which shows a similar pattern to southern Europe, and the Baltic States who resemble more to northern Europe.

Our next step was to describe patterns in remarriage rates. These appeared to decline, with sex- and country-specific differences remaining fairly constant and whereby we deduced that in countries with traditionally high levels of divorce rates (e.g. Scandinavia), remarriage is not necessarily the preferred repartnering option for the divorced population. Moreover, while part of the international differences in repartnering and reparenting can be accredited to differences in divorce legislation (González, Viitanen, 2009), there are also other factors that influence it. As we were able to show with data from the FFS, being male, under 25, having had a consensual union as first union that was also childless was often, but not always, associated with both post-first union trajectories in the countries that were analysed (the results have been summarised in Table 10). We may consider the countries where this was almost always the case, i.e. in Austria, Germany, France, Finland and Spain exemplify a more traditional pattern of repartnering and post first-union parenthood, while in those countries were few significant differences were ascertained to have a more heterogeneous pattern (i.e. Estonia, Slovenia, Hungary and Belgium). Finally, Norway is situated somewhere in the middle.

The survival functions also provided us with estimates of the median timing of post-first-union transitions for the 10 European countries (Tables 4-7). If we would only consider the results for women, we may distinguish three different patterns of post-divorce trajectories: countries where both new unions and post-first-union parenthood occur relatively quickly (Norway, Germany, Hungary, Belgium), countries where new unions may also take place as quick as in the first group but where the transition to new parenthood is slower (Austria Slovenia, Finland, France, and Estonia) and the third group which only contains Spain because it is a clear outlier as it takes a long time for both transitions to occur (Figure 8).

Table 10. Differences in repartnering and new parenthood according to union type, sex and age. Summary of results using FFS data.

	Repartnering	**New parenthood**
1. Differences or not between sexes		
a. Men enter faster in new partnership or parenthood after end of 1st union than women	Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Spain	Austria
b. No statistical difference (95% level)	Belgium, Estonia, Hungary, Norway, Slovenia	Belgium[a], Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Norway, Slovenia[a], Spain[a]
2. Differences or not between 1st union type		
a. More likely to occur if 1st union was consensual rather than marriage	Austria, Finland, France, Germany	Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Norway, Spain
b. No statistical difference (95% level)	Belgium, Estonia, Hungary, Norway, Slovenia, Spain	Estonia, Hungary, Slovenia
3. Differences or not between age groups		
a. Younger cohorts enter faster in new partnership or parenthood after end of 1st union than 35+ population	Austria, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Norway, Spain	Austria, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Norway, Spain
b. No statistical difference (95% level)	Belgium, Slovenia	Belgium, Slovenia
4. Differences or not between previous fertility		
a. Those without children enter faster in new partnership or parenthood after end of 1st union than those who are already parents	Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Norway, Slovenia, Spain	Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Norway, Slovenia, Spain
b. No statistical difference (95% level)	Estonia	Estonia

Source: FFS data (own calculations).
Notes: [a]In these countries motherhood was more likely to occur after separation or divorce than fatherhood, but results were not statistically significant.

One explanation for the latter result can be found in the regression analysis: youth unemployment was one of the two variables significant in the analysis of second union formation and Spain observed a rate of over 40% at the time the FFS was conducted there. For the same token, in some of the countries where second union formation occurs more rapidly youth unemployment was much lower (especially in Germany), while in other countries it was not youth unemployment but it was a low GDP that was associated with a low median time in repartnering (the Eastern European countries). In other words, it is either a lack of personal income security that delays union formation or general economic welfare. This seems paradoxical, but accords with results from other studies: Sobotka (2008) sees the former as a response to different structural conditions marked by economic crisis, while general welfare tends to postpone union formation.

Finally, as common sense would suggest and our results confirmed, the relative postponement for women to start a (new) family after a first union disruption was first and foremost related to the median time it took to form a new union. However, it was delayed further in countries where women were more likely to work or have obtained post-secondary level education, i.e. consistent what the literature says about the effect of female education (e.g. Mensch et al. 2005) and labour force activity (e.g. Goode 1963) on the delay in first marriage timing. This suggests that in countries where women who have already experienced a serious relationship wait to have children until they are financially secure (either for themselves or to be able to (co)provide for a family).In fact, in some countries about half of the FFS respondents (still) had not had children after a first union disruption. Being higher educated and active in the workforce therefore seems a worthy alternative to starting a family for many women. Moreover, it increases the opportunity costs of childbearing in terms of foregone wages (Becker 1981; Kohler et al. 2006). Indeed, voluntary childlessness is known to be more common among higher educated women (De Feijter 1991), among whom, according to the 'classical' narrative of the SDT as described by Sobotka (2008), secular individualism and an orientation towards personal self-fulfilment, the transformation in values and attitudes towards family, children and sexuality seem to be most widespread. Although in our final analysis on reparenting we contemplated countries instead of individuals, our results seem to be consistent with this. However, only detailed event history analysis that looks at the entire life courses of the respondents would be able to verify if such factors are also determinants at the individual level.

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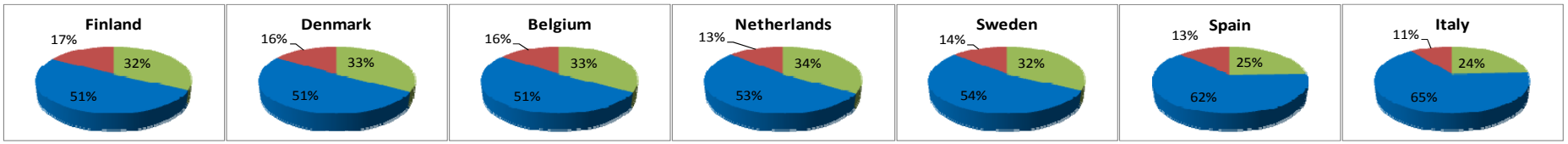
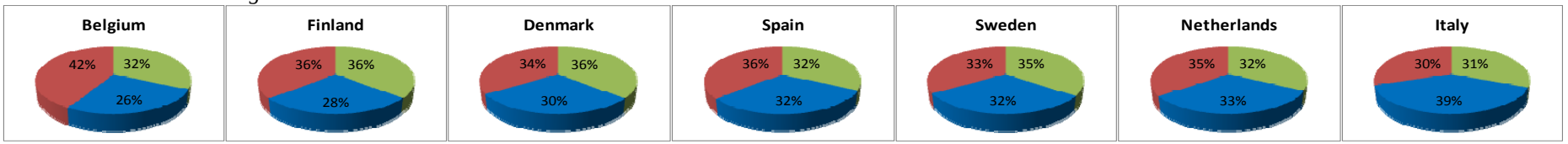
Appendix. Newly-wed divorcees by relative age of spouse and partner's previous marital status. 2006 or thereabouts.

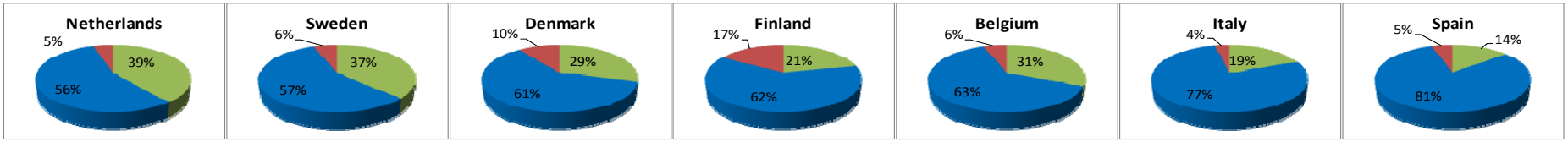
1. Divorced women and divorced men



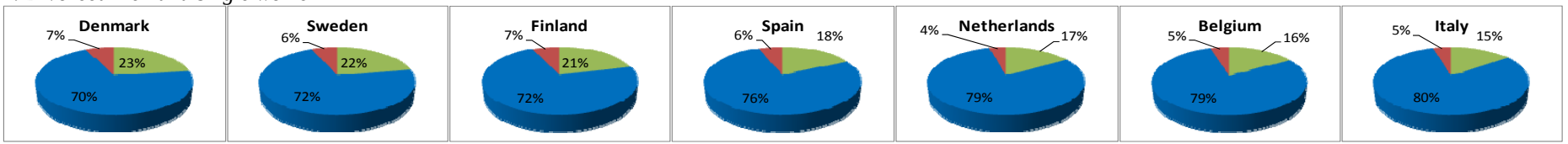
2. Divorced women and single men



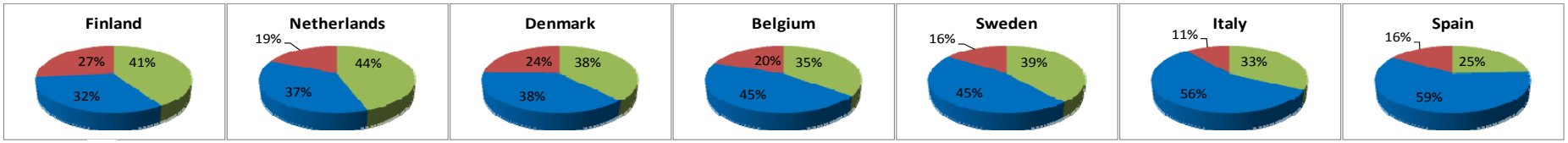
3. Divorced women and widowed men



4. Divorced men and single women



5. Divorced men and widowed women



Legend: Same age (within same 5 -year age interval) Husband > Wife Wife > Husband.
Data source: National statistical institutes (websites and personal communication).