

## Priority for Family and Marriage

ECPM recognizes the family as the most important social entity in the world, it precedes the state and any other community or group. Life starts in the family and relations start in the family. The natural family is a micro-society where elementary skills and experiences are being conveyed. Healthy families lead to a healthy society while fragmented families do the opposite.

The ECPM wants the European Union to respect the sovereignty of the family, based on marriage between one man and one woman, and recognize its inherent rights that are inalienable. The family is not a mere collection of individuals and therefore legislation based solely on the individual will eventually collide with the rights of the family.

### **The future of Europe**

Any vision on the future of the European Union and the Member States should include a view on how to promote healthy families whereas they:

- Are the starting point for forming human assets
- Accompany life from the beginning until the natural end
- Create the social space where children gain confidence, establish relations and grow up into responsible adults
- Give care to infants, children and the elderly and by doing so strengthen solidarity in society while saving state expenditure on, for example, medical and physiological care

Investing in children is investing in the future, as they will grow up to become the most important resource. Parents who invest in their children therefore invest in society as a whole. Parents should not be economically “punished” for taking responsibility to raise their children.

Without any doubt, the view on family and marriage is one of the most important and influential political issues. Many religious, cultural, historical and economical aspects are involved in creating a view. ECPM believes that any form of policy on family should therefore be the responsibility of the Member States and the EU should respect subsidiarity, especially regarding this subject.

### **Balancing care & work**

The family is a caring unity. People, as relational beings, need this environment before they need career, possessions and wealth. At the same time it is clear that the family needs a sound economy to be able to support family life.

The majority of the families in Europe are struggling to find some balance between paid work and family life. To complicate matters, in Western Europe unpaid work is much undervalued at the expense of family life. We advocate therefore that policy makers will see the intrinsic and economical value of care for one’s home and children. In EU economic policies however an economic view is dominant before the freedom and intrinsic value of the family. Two full-time working parents are seen as a general goal in order to sustain the economy.

It is important that care and work can be balanced. In our view the economy has to be balanced towards the family and not just the family towards the economic processes. Without the view that the economy has to serve families, soon family life becomes subordinated to economic processes. In recent years we have seen too often that measures to repair the economic crisis have caused economic hardship for families. At the same time (extended) family life has been the reason why people were able to carry on throughout the crisis.

EU policy makers can consider the effects of the EU economic policies without interfering in the family policies of the member states. The ECPM does not call for EU measures for families but rather for a change of attitude among policy makers in this regard.

### **Labour migration**

The EU should facilitate the Member States only in considering issues that are crossing borders. The most important item is the social consequences of labour migration. The internal market has brought many blessings to the European continent but it has also put families under pressure. Hundreds of thousands of migration workers temporarily work and live in a different country than their families. Especially, in Poland, Romania and Bulgaria this phenomenon is imminent. Whereas there is a clear economic benefit for the man or woman to work abroad - earning a better salary in order to sustain the family economically - , it does have serious negative consequences for the family that is still in the country of origin.

The root of this problem is the extreme focus on economic participation and job emancipation for women. The extreme focus on the economy instead of on the well-being of people has led to one-sided policies in EU and Member State legislation. This mistake needs to be corrected.