

**SS. CYRIL AND METHODIUS UNIVERSITY IN SKOPJE
FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY**

SCIENCE AND SOCIETY: CONTRIBUTION OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

**Proceedings of the International Conference
on the occasion of the centennial anniversary
of the Faculty of Philosophy
2-5 September Struga 2020**

Skopje 2021



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CURRENT ISSUES OF THE SOCIAL STATUS AND PROTECTION OF THE FAMILY IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

Summary: Article 40 of the 1991 Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia stipulates that the Republic provides special care and protection of the family which is, in its way, an integral element of the broader constitutional category that the Republic of North Macedonia is a social state.

When looking at the social rights in the country, provided by constitutional provisions, further elaborated by certain legal acts - it can be concluded that there is a scientific and social justification to elaborate on the permanent and current issues of social status and social protection of the Macedonian family.

At the community level, steps, measures, and actions are taken to determine the social needs of the family as well as to identify them to provide support and assistance. These measures are of broader scope and will be refined in the paper according to the current issues in specific areas.

Key words: family, family pension, social rights, social protection, social protection law.

Introduction and topic relevance

A happy family is but an earlier heaven.

(Bernard Shaw)

Other things may change us but we start and end with the family.

(Anthony Brandt)

In every conceivable manner, the family is linked to our past, and a bridge to our future.

(Alex Hailey)

In the period after 1974 and after the constitutional reforms of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia at that time and accordingly, of Socialist Republic of Macedonia, especially after the republic declared its independence in 1991 and adopted the Constitution of a sovereign and independent state – in its manner, the society respected, supported and enticed the autonomous

processes, changes, and relations in the family. In this sense, in a completely spontaneous manner, the concept of family cooperative and other forms of family life was abandoned and the autonomous nuclear family concept was affirmed, democratic relationships in family living were enticed, increased equality among family members was enabled – especially between the man and woman, conditions for increased employability of the woman and her social emancipation were created...

The main trends in family structures and their shifts in the past decades in the European and by that, in Macedonian families as well, are as follows: fertility rates have decreased; giving birth occurs later in life and more frequently, outside of marriage; marriage, as well, is postponed and more frequently inevitable, and relationships – inside and outside of marriage – have become stronger. These changes have led to increasingly complex family relationships and increasing diversity of family forms and relationships during life. New family trends and models are parallel to the shift in gender roles, especially to the expansion of the role of the woman who is included in the economic security of the family and lately, a transformation of the male form can be seen, regarding the man's more intensive involvement in the family obligations with an accent on childcare. It is generally accepted that the family is a dynamic entity, with an increasing complexity regarding adopting decisions in the transition periods during family life and organizing family life. Indeed, the family cannot be simply described as a collection of well-defined roles that are agreed upon on daily basis, built by the interactions of partners on a micro-level and under the influence of macro structures in the political and economic sphere. Work and family life impact each other more and more, women and men exert for earnings as well as caring activities, frequently accompanied by instability in the employment and insecurity. Gender relations and related values and points of view have become easily changeable and the workflow in the aspect of an intermingling of the lines of family and work-life dynamically changes).

Republic of North Macedonia during March of this year, 2020, by a decision of the relevant institutions, received the green light to initiate negotiations for becoming a full and permanent member of the European Union. By this, regardless of the specific procedural acts during the negotiations, a portion of the process refers to family problematics and social policies in the spirit of the new European social policy that has been promoted for almost more than a decade. Such as early childhood care, social policy focused on fostered

children, exercise of parental rights, protection of the rights and interests of children, social care and healthcare for the family, incentives for giving birth, new family models, same-sex partnerships, and same-sex marriages, and adoption of children in these circumstances.

As a result, it is logically productive to analyze the general and specific relations between society and family.

European countries and their ability to adjust to social changes

The most accepted classification is the classification of three groups of countries in Europe (highly developed, developed, and developing countries). The classification and the groups are relevant for this analysis regarding the existence and application of external factors that influence the family.

The first group consists of countries with a high extent of economic indicators, demographic organization, and a high degree of practicing liberties and rights of people and also countries that are open to new occurrences.

A mid-degree related to the first and third groups are noted with the countries whose indicators show sufficient social development and create opportunities for its stimulus and growth with increased velocity whereas the third group is still dealing with existential issues and is slower to introduce modern flows in its social tissue.

The first group is most illustratively represented by the Scandinavian countries and the Benelux, the second group comprises of the countries from the Eastern Bloc that joined the European Union and members of the third group are the Balkan countries and some of the countries from the Socialist lager.

The direct communication between the societies of certain countries with the families living within them will be elaborated on in the part where we speak about extended statistical indicators for certain family issues and conditions.

The historical climate and tradition are factors that can indicate relative or accented differences between the countries because of the dominant practices.

In the highly developed countries, in an economic and democratic sense, there is a general framework for the development of the family but also big changes and major disturbances of the family life and family functioning. The developing countries that deal with resolving basic existential issues mark the existence of families that live in unity, understanding, tolerance but also mark separation and deterioration of families. (A considerable problem in these countries is the abandonment of the country due to economic, developmental and carrier-wise reasons of family members, mostly young married

couples or single young people and the results of this phenomena are changes and disturbance in the family life and problems in the family's existence and development.).

Democratically developed societies such as countries in Western Europe promote a favorable climate for wide public acceptance of new occurrences that are related to various issues, including the family.

The countries that belonged to the socialist system, during the transformation from monopolistic to plural-democratic society demonstrated a layered adapting ability. Part of them demonstrated that they are easily and highly adaptable (such as the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Latvia, Estonia, Slovenia), some of them journeyed through a slower adapting process (such as Poland, Croatia, Lithuania), and some remained, in the general sense, conservative societies (such as Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo, Bosnia, and Herzegovina).

Regarding the family, almost a direct understanding of the new occurrences are noted (same-sex partnerships, adopting children into such partnerships, the definition of marriage), following the extent of democratization and adaptability to new circumstances.

In the function of making the topic relevant and because the Republic of North Macedonia is expecting the initiation of EU accession negotiations, we have created an outline of a few groups of countries that are and shall continue to be examples for our country in terms of policies and practices related to the wider problem of the concept of family.

In this aspect, the modern countries of welfare from the European Union can be grouped as follows:

Firstly, the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, and Sweden) who's starting points are the assumptions of the instable marketplace and family mechanisms and following this, develop a sustainable state alternative. The state-funded programs for assistance are very inclusive and are dominant in society. The marketplace and the family are seen as alternative means of obtaining social security, i.e. the formula "both family and marketplace" is applicable.

In the second place, the Anglo-Saxon countries (Great Britain as an EU member state until recently, Ireland) that consider market mechanisms as their pillar, develop private insurance programs and the role of the family and in particular the role of the state are minimized and considered to be residual actors.

The system of measures for state-funded aid, as a rule, is the last alternative and is directed only towards the entities that are the most affected by poverty.

As a third group, the Mediterranean countries (Spain, Portugal, Greece, Italy) wherein certain segments, the neoliberal logic of relying on the marketplace is reproduced whereas in other aspects the principles of universal population scope are valid (healthcare, for example). Family solidarity is an inevitable generator of welfare and has a significant impact on the (no) exposure to poverty.

Fourthly, the continental countries (Germany, France, Belgium, Slovenia, Austria, Luxemburg) that entice the social responsibility of the family and the local community. In these countries, the roles of the marketplace and the state are specifically intermingled in a way that the social insurance programs are available for individuals that are active in the marketplace (and members of their families), and programs for social protection programs are applicable for individuals that are excluded from the marketplace.

As a fifth group, the Eastern-European countries (Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia) where the former sub-state systems of social protection are transformed in the direction a neoliberal approach. The relationship between the marketplace and state responsibilities is jeopardized due to financial limitations. In these countries, even the maximum amounts of social aid are relatively low.

According to these constataions, the Republic of North Macedonia is directed to conduct a selection process on the general approach and measures that will be appropriate for the economic growth of the country, the democratic processes as well as the existential needs of the families as well as the needs for growth regardless of the group of European Union countries they were or are implemented in, however, the closes concept is the continental countries concept.

***Social aspects on family protection in the Republic of North Macedonia
(social policies and instruments of social protection)***

The basic assumption for the relationship between society and the family is that it entails deep, entangled inter-relations, permanent and occasional relations between the two concepts of wholeness and inter-influences with a possible or negative impact. (The elaborate in this paper has been based following the defined topic of the scientific gathering in the part titled: “New family structures and Social reality”).

How is the impact that society has on family mirrored, i.e. in which aspects does society affect a family?

- First and a significantly important line and issue with which the society impacts family is the creation of conditions for forming and the existence of a family, affirmation and constant support of the public and widely accepted opinion that the existence of the family as an organized functional unit and securing its status in the society by accepting the roles and functions of the family is a necessity.
- Society, through government mechanisms and ruling, defines the legal status of the family (by constitutional acts, one or more legal acts and other legal regulations) which is practically the most influential factor in the direct sense, of how society (mostly within the framework of one state) sees the family, its roles, protection, key issues, and inter-familial relations. Our state, in the spirit of the modern legislature, has adopted laws, programs, decisions that establish the protection and progress of the family.
- Besides, society conceptualizes, puts in the practice, and values social actions of short and long term character, that are utilized to entice or impede certain processes that are family-related. Entire subsystems of the social policy of a country refer to the family (healthcare protection and insurance, social measures, accommodation, children's rights, etc.). The legal matter in this country is completely oriented towards guaranteeing the satisfaction of the existential needs of the family (social measures, family pension, etc.). To be more specific, society creates conditions for the development of the family (acquiring means for family needs, education, and professional development of the members of the family, for more children in the family, etc.).

In the past decade, the main priorities in child welfare and family policy in the Republic of North Macedonia can be analyzed as following:

Child protection, from all aspects is main priority of many activities and documents: providing a clean and healthy environment (clean air is a significant challenge), protection from child violence, improving of the educational quality and grater enrolment in all educational levels (especially preschool level). Priority groups are children from marginalized groups and children with disabilities.

In terms of family policy, in the last period we were focused on stimulating the birth rate, as well as activities to improve parenting skills.

Through the analysis of the legal framework, national strategies and action plans we would come to the conclusion that North Macedonia has good basis for support of the children, youth and their families. Problems arise during the implementation of those programs.

The main types of family provision and support and key features (e.g. different types of cash support (universal and targeted, work-family reconciliation measures and children's/family services, child care etc)

Cash support to families in general:

1. Allowance for parenting (for a third child)
2. Maternity leave (9 months for single birth, and 12 months for twins)
3. Participation in the costs for attending preschool state institution
4. Scholarships for talented elementary and high school students
5. Scholarships for talented university students
6. Credits for university students

Cash support for social protection of financially unsecured families:

1. Child allowance
2. Guaranteed minimum allowance
3. Housing allowance
4. One-time financial allowance
5. One-time allowance for newborn child
6. Participation in the costs for care and recreation of children in a public institutions for children.
7. Conditional cash transfers for high school students who attend to school regularly
8. Scholarships for orphans

Cash support for social protection of families with disabled child:

1. Special allowance
2. Allowance for disability
3. Allowance for assistance and care from another person
4. Part-time salary compensation
5. Permanent allowance for a foster family
6. Participation in the costs in some medical treatment
7. How does family impact society?

Family as well, has its impact on society, processes, and relations within it, and this is seen as logical and natural.

- ♦ It is a fact that the reproduction of the population, in the most dominant form, it still takes place through the family (this can also be statistically proven).

The reproduction of humans as individuals and also of the entire humanity dominantly takes place in specific families regardless of their model and social/legal status.

In fact, with the legal, ethical acceptance and the acceptance of the idea of single-parent families, regulating the adoption of children, securing contributions and privileges for foster families and granting the family status of single-sex partnerships (including their right to adopt children), a conclusion can be drawn that practically, the family is the only organized system/occurrence/phenomena for the reproduction of life.

(A few years ago, as an example, a campaign titled “ Every child needs a family” was organized and conducted in this country).

- ♦ Furthermore, family engagement helps in the resolution of issues of importance for the promotion of society (family - economic projects - employment and benefits to the society arising from it - payment of contributions to the state’s system for social insurance; introduction of family capital; family traditions of belonging to the society; familial efforts for the legal and political system - loyalty, patriotism, portions of education and upbringing).

The family also appears as an economic subject, especially in the sense of organization, management, and development of social-economic forms - organizations, enterprises, businesses in all parts of the economic functioning (production, trade, banking, craftsmanship). In this manner, the family is part of the social flow, in its important sphere - the economy, and by this, it resolves an important social problem - unemployment.

Simultaneously, these family - economic subjects enter contributions/means in the social budget that are utilized for financing the organization and functioning of state / public activities (defense, protection, public education, culture, healthcare) and state capital projects (infrastructure, objects, systems).

The inside of the family is an environment where a long-term approach that reflects as loyalty towards the educational system, patriotism towards one’s own country, standpoint towards religious and ethical occurrences, processes, and behaviors is built.

The processes of education and upbringing of young generations also take place in the family which also includes the part that specifically belongs to the family but is also a social obligation and concern.

Of course, there are also family difficulties that affect the society: unresolved existential issues, such as apartment, conditions for life, social requests, lack of care and deficit of creating conditions for offspring, its life and development; deterioration of the family life values as a negative example for a reason not to create a family; abandonment of the family members that become a responsibility and burden of the social community. All this practically enables asocial and deviant behavior such as bullying, criminal, deceases. This sort of violence becomes a social problem and asks for the adoption of legal measures in the authority of the police, public prosecution, courts, and shelters for domestic violence victims. These examples also require property security, professional staff, financial, organizational, and other resources.

After outlining the effects that family and society have on each other, the objective conclusion is that family and society pervade.

Challenges for the family in the relationship family – society

A general overview of the modern challenges arising from the influence society has on family:

- ♦ Process of transformation of the family according to new social conditions.
- ♦ Normative and realistic positioning of new family models.
- ♦ Securing existence means in certain insufficiently developed societies.
- ♦ Migrant processes – youth abandoning their native land that deteriorates the family life (here) and in the new residences (countries) raises the question for forming a family in these environments, their mutual communication, co-inhabitation, marriage, conditions for family life – apartment, it's equipping, it's location in regards of distance from work, new family members, their upbringing, adaptation to the surroundings, education, and socialization.
- ♦ Facing the emancipating processes of the family members.
- ♦ Same-sex partnerships and same-sex marriages and adoption of children in these circumstances (facing the involved traditional and conservatives points of view, adaptation of the adopted children and their acceptance in the community), the regulation of their legal status, resistance from the surroundings and their future.

- ♦ Raising an offspring (work engagement of the parents, facing difficulties, stimulation for absences, and other privileges).
- ♦ Whether the existence of the family is under question (stimulus for giving birth – compensation for a second, third child, etc.).
- ♦ What are the challenges that the families face autonomously?
- ♦ Fight between genders as a modern pain and occurrence, the man and the woman on opposite sides and not together and embraced in a warm marriage bed.
- ♦ Conflicts for authority in the children's upbringing, conflicts in terms of financial plans, and intellectual plans between spouses, the occurrence of manly women and feminized men...
- ♦ Different points of view for institutions and forms, services for acquainting and getting closer to their spouses, planning a family, marital advice (before and during marriage and also after divorce), during which process men are the ones who more often decline advice, unlike females...
- ♦ Conflicts regarding the fulfillment of parenting rights after the divorce.
- ♦ An increasingly frequent behavior in which the modern human believes that his/her personality and freedom must be respected, that marriage is not compulsory and that its existence is just for the sake of children and the community, that family is a limitation of freedom, independence, and autonomy.
- ♦ Decisions to enter into marriage are harder to adopt and getting married later in life.
- ♦ Numerous divorces that result in the occurrence of torn apart children.
- ♦ Relations in same-sex marriages and adoption of children.
- ♦ Families who wish to have children but are unable to due to physiological reasons.
- ♦ (Dis)function of the family – torn apart families, dysfunctional relationships, families that are threatened by divorce.
- ♦ Evident family violence (which persons are the victims and which are the perpetrators).

Conclusion

Our country has regularly and systematically followed and supported the movements and changes in family life and reflected this throughout solutions in the form of legal acts, public support of modern tendencies, organization of programs and activities directed towards support and affirmation of the autonomous and democratic family life and its prosperity. Through the analysis of the legal framework, national strategies and action plans we would come

to the conclusion that North Macedonia has good basis for support of the children, youth and their families. Problems arise during the implementation of those programs.

However, in the future, society should value the following processes and act accordingly:

- Changes (shifts) in the relationship society – family;
- Relationships between family members;
- Economy movements: service industry professions, digitalization, development of the pedagogic and social conditions;
- Biological – reproductive processes where families would plan the number of children;
- Inter-relations in the accomplishment of the economic function: will the family be only a consuming entity, or a business – entity as well;
- The dimensions of the moral – educational function, how to maintain it, will the family be the center, i.e. the nucleus of this function;
- Whether the family will be a reservoir of love, happiness, warmth, tranquility, security, honesty, happy childhood;
- The fulfillment of functions that will secure the future of the family especially through reaffirmation of the children's and family's rights.

In this sense, relationships filled with equality, respect, deep emotional connection, stable relations of democracy taking into account the position of each individual, equality among spouses, increased employment and independence of women (even though this can mean over-burdening the women in the workplace and the family) should be advocated for.

Furthermore, efforts for overcoming the alienation of the individual within the family that is also transferable in the society should be made, as well as efforts for eliminating the patterns of abandonment, a lower degree of attention or harassment of the children, i.e. prevent the occurrences of minor delinquency.

The society should take into account those challenges and to adjust the social policies in this context in order to provide better family support.

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