

# The Relational State of Europe Snapshot

# 2013

It is becoming widely recognized that the quality of relationships make a significant contribution to the overall wellbeing of individuals and of wider society. Nevertheless, little attention has been paid to this fact in discussions regarding economic failure and recovery since the global financial crisis began in 2008. This snapshot seeks to provide a general overview of the quality of community, workplace and family relationships across Europe within this context.

## Summary Report

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The Relational State of Europe Snapshot is a collaborative project between Jubilee Centre, Relationships Foundation and Relationships Global.

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The research and publication of this report was made possible through a grant from the European Christian Political Foundation.

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## Introduction

In a particularly notable way over the past five years, economic headlines have grabbed attention across Europe since the beginning of the ongoing economic crisis in 2008. The media, politicians and public opinion have explicitly or silently ranked countries according to economic 'success'; that is, by the way in which they have dealt with the financial implications of the crash both within their own countries and in relation to other European nations and to the European Union as a whole.

According to these measures of success, Germany has perhaps topped the league (although not without some hostility from international media and public opinion), and is joined near the top by the Netherlands, France, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland and the Nordic countries. The economic failure of other countries has been painfully obvious, with high levels of debt, high interest rates and high unemployment rates bringing Greece, Spain, Ireland, Portugal and Italy into the international spotlight.

As tragic as these headlines are, they fall short of painting a complete picture of the crisis. In 1968 Robert Kennedy questioned the value of purely economic indicators (specifically, Gross National Product) in assessing a country's 'success':

*"Too much and too long, we seem to have surrendered community excellence and community values in the mere accumulation of material things. Our gross national product...if we should judge America by that- counts air pollution and cigarette advertising, and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts special locks for our doors and the jails for those who break them...Yet the gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education, the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages; the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials...It measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile"<sup>1</sup>.*

Kennedy was right to question the assumption that economic growth alone constitutes the defining measure of a country's success. Important as it is, it ignores other indicators of wellbeing which provide a broader scope for judging the overall health of a country. Indeed, the Easterlin Paradox questions the assumption that people are happier the greater their income and has led to research bodies such as Eurofound and the OECD undertaking to compare international levels of wellbeing based on a wider range of indicators.<sup>2</sup> Although such research goes a long way to assessing overall quality of life of individuals it lacks an underlying framework with which to gauge levels of wellbeing in countries.

This report argues that relationships are the key factor in this, and that a comprehensive framework can be built around the nature and health of relationships in public as well as private life. 'Relationism'<sup>3</sup> argues that individuals are connected in a series of complex associations with others, and the quality of these associations will determine to a large extent the quality of life of the individual. The aim of this report, therefore, is to provide a high-level overview of the relational health of Europe which can contribute to discussions regarding the reworking of Europe's economic model in the light of the crisis, encouraging consideration of the relational impact of these decisions.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert F. Kennedy, University of Kansas, 18 March 1968.

<http://images2.americanprogress.org/campus/email/RobertFKennedyUniversityofKansas.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Eurofound's *European Quality of Life Surveys*.

<sup>3</sup> For a fuller discussion of Relationism see

<http://www.relationshipsglobal.net/Web/Content/Default.aspx?Content=32>

## In defence of a relational approach: why do relationships matter?

- Media reporting of the crisis often neglects the social context of the economic headlines, ignoring the personal, societal and relational costs of financial hardship. Yet it is on these levels that electorates in any country experience the day-to-day implications of economic growth or recession.
- The quality of relationships is critical in determining overall levels of wellbeing:

*Such evidence as we have suggests that social connections, including marriage, of course, but not limited to that, are among the most robust correlates of subjective well-being. People who have close friends and confidants, friendly neighbours and supportive co-workers are less likely to experience sadness, loneliness, low self-esteem and problems with eating and sleeping. Indeed a common finding from research on the correlates of life satisfaction is that subjective well-being is best predicted by the breadth and depth of one's social connections.<sup>4</sup>*

- Relational breakdown has economic costs that Europe cannot afford. On a family level, the cost of breakdown in the U.K. alone has reached £46bn in 2013<sup>5</sup>. The breakdown of community relationships incurs costs such as for policing and prisons and programmes to tackle gang violence. The cost of youth unemployment in 2012 reached €150bn.

Implication: Policy focus on improved relationships serves the overall interests of voters and contributes to improved economic outcomes.

Given the importance of considering the quality of relationships alongside economic data, this report will discuss the relational health of Europe with particular focus on three types of relationship: community, workplace and family relationships. For each relationship we will look at a series of indicators across several European countries, and, where possible, for the continent as a whole, and draw some conclusions regarding the quality of these relationships. Where data allows, we will begin a discussion of the possible impact of the recession on these relationships.

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<sup>4</sup> Heliwell and Putnam, (2005), The social context of wellbeing. In *The Science of Wellbeing*

<sup>5</sup> *Cost of Family Failure Index*, The Relationships Foundation. [www.relationshipsfoundation.org](http://www.relationshipsfoundation.org)

## Community Relationships

For the purpose of this report we will separate data regarding community relationships into ‘closer’ associations, such as friend or neighbour relationships, and wider community involvement.

### a) Close relationships:

#### *i. Strength of neighbour relationships<sup>6</sup>:*

As a whole, neighbour relationships seem to have improved during the years 1994-2000 (more recent data is not available), with the percentage of people who talk to their neighbours at least once a week having remained constant or improved. The most notable improvements are found in Greece (+4%), The Netherlands (+8%), Portugal (+4%) and Spain (+4%). Finland, Denmark and the UK reported a 1% decline during the period. The highest percentages of people who talk with their neighbours more than once a week are found in Greece (minimum 93%), Spain and Ireland (both minimum 89%)

#### *ii. Frequency of Social Contact:*

Data regarding the percentage of people who rarely or never spend time with friends, colleagues or other social groups<sup>7</sup> indicates that Southern European countries have weaker social relationships than the rest of Europe: Spain (6.7%), Italy (7.6%), France (8.1%) and Portugal (9.5%) all had higher percentages than the average of 5.5%. These countries were joined by Austria (7.5%), Finland (7.5%) and the Czech Republic (10%). Data would indicate that friendships are strongest in Sweden, with only 0.8% of respondents rarely or never spending time with friends, colleagues or other social groups, followed by the Netherlands (2%), Ireland (2.9%), Denmark (3.3%) and Greece (3.7%).

### b) Wider community relationships:

#### *i. Participation in Voluntary and Social activities*

Higher levels of participation in voluntary work and social activities tend to be found in Northern European countries, with all of the Nordic countries, Austria, the UK, Netherlands, Luxembourg, France and Germany reporting higher than average percentages of people involved in voluntary work. The lowest levels of participation are to be found in many of the formerly communist Eastern Bloc countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Poland, Latvia and Lithuania).<sup>8</sup> It has been suggested<sup>9</sup> that the cultural legacy of communism has not favoured a culture of volunteering. Correlation has also been noted between high levels of participation in voluntary and social activities and higher levels of education and income.

#### *ii. Perceived levels of trust<sup>10</sup>*

Trust is one of the foundational characteristics on which healthy relationships are built. As may be expected, there is overall positive correlation between the countries with the strongest friendship, neighbour and social relationships and levels of ‘social capital’, or trust in other people. The highest levels of trust in 2009 were recorded in the Nordic countries and the Netherlands, and the lowest in Greece, the Czech Republic and Portugal. Low levels of trust in Germany may indicate that they are not strongly linked to comparative economic success, and the largest relative decreases in trust levels in the years 2007-2011 are across a range of countries, including Cyprus, Sweden, the Czech

<sup>6</sup> Eurofound *EurLife* database, 1994-2000 data

<sup>7</sup> OECD *Society at a Glance 2005*, p83

<sup>8</sup> Eurofound, *Third European Quality of Life Survey*, 2012

<sup>9</sup> Eurofound *Volunteering - A force for change* resource pack online summary.

<sup>10</sup> Eurofound, *Third European Quality of Life Survey*, 2012

Republic and Ireland. In general, there was a notable decline in levels of trust in other people during the years 2003-2009 but levels rose again slowly until 2011 when they were just below the 2007 levels.

### *iii. Perceived levels of ethnic tension and discrimination<sup>11</sup>*

Europeans consider discrimination according to ethnic grounds to be more prevalent than on any other grounds, sounding a warning for the health of wider community relationships, particularly given the high levels of migration both within EU countries and from outside. Ethnic discrimination outside of the workplace is seen as widespread by at least seven out of ten respondents in France (76%), Cyprus and Sweden (both 75%), and Greece, the Netherlands, Denmark and Hungary (all 70%). At the other end of the scale, less than a third of EU citizens living in Lithuania (17%) and Poland and Latvia (both 26%) share this view. In these three countries an above average proportion of respondents also say spontaneously that discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin is non-existent (8%, 11% and 16%, respectively, compared to the EU average of 2%).

Despite the high levels of perceived tension, in most countries the situation is thought to have improved since 2009, suggesting amelioration in some community relationships. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents across the EU also think that discrimination issues have fallen out of focus for policy makers since the advent of the economic crisis, suggesting that the urgency of economic recovery has forced policy focus away from relational issues.

Ethnic discrimination continues to be seen as widespread by a majority of Europeans but this view is now less pronounced than in 2009. Discrimination on grounds of ethnic origin is seen as more widespread than other forms of discrimination (e.g. on gender, religious, age or sexual orientation grounds): overall, 56% of Europeans think that it is widespread. 37% consider that it is rare and 2% answer spontaneously that it is non-existent in their country.

### *iv. Increased levels of perceived societal tension, 2007-09*

The decline in levels of perceived societal tension between 2003 and 2007 was reversed between 2007 and 2009. The proportion increased between two and three percentage points on average, with greater increases occurring in the twelve New Member States<sup>12</sup> (the average increase was 6 percentage points as far as interethnic relationships is concerned). This data, along with the increase in perceived tensions between rich and poor highlights the relational cost of the economic crisis to society as a whole. The most marked increase in tension between rich and poor occurred in Malta and Slovenia, where there was a rise of 13 percentage points in proportion of citizens reporting 'a lot' of tension. Although smaller, the increase (of at least 6-11 percentage points) in perceived tension between rich and poor in many northern European countries (Estonia, UK, Finland, Sweden, Ireland, Latvia, Slovakia) suggests that the relational cost of the crisis is felt in richer European countries and should not be ignored by governments. The Occupy movement of 2011/12, which saw protests in most European countries, indicated the levels of public anger at how income inequality was growing more rapidly after the onset of the financial crisis. Negative correlation between respondents' degree of affluence and perceived tension emphasizes the importance of promoting good relationships between different social groups through policy.

<sup>11</sup> All data regarding perceived levels of tension between ethnic groups and between rich and poor is from Eurofound *Trends in Quality of Life in the EU 2003-2009* and Eurofound *Third Quality of Life Survey, Impacts of the Crisis*, 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.



#### v. Crime Rates

The early warning signs for relational health of increased tension and decline in community involvement are counterbalanced by some positive signs for wider societal relationships from crime statistics.<sup>13</sup> The total crime rate in the EU fell between 2002 and 2009, which may indicate a general improvement in relational health. However, this is difficult to prove. Although much research has been carried out into the causal link between poor family relationships and criminality, still more could be done to investigate links between the extent of community breakdown and its effect on crime rates. There has been an increase in reported crimes in Romania, Luxembourg, Denmark, Sweden, Portugal and Finland, Iceland and Liechtenstein in the 2006-09 period.

There have been more incidents of domestic burglary and drug trafficking. Property crime constitutes an indirect attack on relationships: more frequently than is the case for violent crime, the perpetrator and victim are not known to each other. This relational distance enables the perpetrator to put his desire for the property above any concern for the effects of the theft upon the owner. The increase in domestic burglary in the EU may be evidence of ongoing breakdown of community relationships, especially in contexts where these relationships are already weak. (This assertion is supported by statistics showing an overall decline in levels of trust in others, see below, and an increase in perceived levels of societal tension, especially since the start of the economic crisis).

Statistics for homicide rates and violent crime demonstrate wide disparity between countries, with the highest rates in Lithuania (8.31 victims per 100,000 population as a yearly average for 2007-09), Estonia (5.74), Albania (4.38) and Turkey (4.16) and lowest in Malta (0.0), Iceland (0.32), Austria (0.54), Norway (0.65), Switzerland (0.66), Slovenia (0.79), Germany (0.89), and Spain (0.96). Close analysis of violent crime is difficult as some Member States differ from standard definitions. However, general trends show a decline in the EU of about 7% (2006-2009), with significant rises in Cyprus, Denmark, Luxembourg, Greece and Sweden and notable falls in Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, the United Kingdom, Poland and the Czech Republic.

From 2000, the number of recorded crimes in the EU27 rose to a peak around 2003, but subsequently fell each year through to 2008, with significant declines (20% or more) in Poland, Malta, and England and Wales<sup>14</sup>.

From a relational perspective, there are some promising signs for Europe as a whole. All crime constitutes an attack on a relationship which is more or less direct in nature. Crimes of a violent or sexual nature are obvious examples of severe relationship breakdown, especially as the perpetrator is usually well known to the victim. For this reason, the general decline in violent crime in the EU is encouraging and may show some improvement in community relationships, or at least in the management of relationships under severe strain. Lower levels of violent crime will have a positive effect on future community health. On the political stage there has been good progress towards inter-state cooperation on a judicial and law enforcement level. How effectively this co-operation plays out on a practical level is difficult to gauge at this early stage, but the high-level intention to co-operate indicates some improvement on a policy level towards greater levels of relational parity between EU states<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> See Appendix: Community Relationships Base Data Table: Crime Statistics. Original source: Eurostat Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics online database.

<sup>14</sup> Eurostat *Statistics in Focus 6/2012. Population and Social Conditions: Crime and Criminal Justice*

<sup>15</sup> Eurostat *Statistics in Focus 6/2012. Population and Social Conditions: Crime and Criminal Justice*

## Workplace Relationships

The immediate relational costs of the economic crisis are perhaps most obvious when one considers workplace relationships. There are several indicators which demonstrate how the crisis is currently affecting relationships, whereas others signal a warning for potential hazards to relational health in the future.

### a) Indicators of existing relational breakdown:

#### *i. Tension between management and workers<sup>16</sup>*

The highest levels of perceived tension between management and workers are found in Hungary (60%), Greece (59%), Slovenia (56%), and France (48%), countries which have been badly affected on an economic level by the downturn. The interplay between economic and relational strain is clear here. The smallest percentages of people who perceive significant tension between management and workers are in the Nordic countries (5% in Denmark, 15% in Finland and Sweden), Belgium (15%), Germany (24%), the UK (23%) and Malta (24%).

#### *ii. Income inequality levels<sup>17</sup>*

It is rare for the top and bottom earners in a company to know each other personally. Little, if any face-to-face contact occurs between the highest and lowest grade workers in a company, especially in larger corporates. This relational distance is often played out in the pay differentials between them. Although some disparity of income is necessary to cater for skill level, training undergone, responsibility held etc., extremely wide gaps demonstrate an imbalance in how much workers of different grades are valued and creates considerable relational distance. The greatest income inequality is found in Latvia, Bulgaria, Portugal, Spain, Greece, Romania, and the UK, and the lowest in Norway, Iceland, Slovenia, Sweden, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and the Netherlands.

#### *iii. Number of working days lost to strikes<sup>18</sup>:*

Some countries have longstanding striking traditions. Industrial action indicates a level of hostility from workers to employers, or unwillingness to listen to demands on the part of employers. Significant numbers of working days were lost to strikes in the UK, Spain, and France. Latvia, Iceland, Slovakia and Malta lost the fewest days to strikes.

### b) Indicators of possible future relational breakdown:

#### *i. Unemployment and its effects*

Much has been made of unemployment statistics as indicators of economic failure. A relational perspective lends an alternative focus, particularly where youth unemployment is concerned. There are long-term consequences of youth unemployment for health, family, community relationships, and future job prospects, as well as future implications for workplace relationships. The correlation between youth unemployment and the inability to retain stable employment in later life will hinder the formation of good workplace relationships. This is of particular note for Spain and Greece, with youth unemployment currently above 50%, but also for many other European countries.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Eurofound *Third Quality of Life Survey, Impacts of the Crisis, 2012*

<sup>17</sup> See Appendix: Workplace Relationships Base Data Table W6. Original source: Eurostat

<sup>18</sup> See Appendix: Workplace Relationships Base Data Table W7. Original source Eurostat

<sup>19</sup> See Appendix: Workplace Relationships Base Data Table W4 and W5. Original source Eurostat

ii. *Unsocial hours and weekend work are linked to reduced loyalty to a workplace*

There is a proven link between workers who are expected to work weekends, and the number of days of absence and high staff turnover. Repeated absence will inevitably hinder the establishment of strong workplace relationships, and a high staff turnover may discourage workers from trying to form relationships in the first place. This is particularly of note for the Netherlands, Slovakia, UK, Greece, Germany, and Finland, all countries with high percentages of employees regularly working unsocial hours.

## Family Relationships

This report will consider spouse or partner relationships, parent-child relationships and intergenerational relationships (between elderly parents and their adult children and grandchildren). In future the scope could be broadened to include extended family relationships, data availability permitting. Stable family relationships are important for personal well-being and happiness, education of children, welfare provision, social care, employability and social mobility, and the prevention of crime and disorder.<sup>20</sup>

Data regarding family relationships may be split into two categories: one regarding the *existence* of family units (Marriage rates, divorce rates, cohabitation rates, and fertility rates) and the other concerning the *quality* of the relationships (awareness of domestic violence sufferers in the family, child well-being, percentage of children living with both parents, ease that children have in talking to their parents). There are also other indicators of the quality of family relationships which will be discussed later in this report, such as the amount of *time* families have available to spend together (influenced by working hours, commuting times and unsocial working patterns); and *pressures* faced by families (e.g. financial pressures).

### a) The Existence of Families

Stable family formation, as evidenced in high marriage rates<sup>21</sup>, is important in Turkey, Cyprus, Macedonia, Malta, Poland, Montenegro, Lithuania, Denmark, and Finland. Out of these countries, Macedonia, Montenegro, Turkey, Poland also have a below average divorce rate, suggesting that the creation and maintenance of a stable nuclear family structure is important in these countries. Other countries with low divorce rates include Ireland, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Iceland. Marriage rates are low in Belgium, France, Estonia, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Hungary, Luxembourg, Bulgaria and Slovenia. High cohabitation rates among young people may signal a warning for the future stability of family units in the following countries: France (21.8%), Netherlands (21.9%), UK (22.2%), Norway (22.7%), Estonia (23.5%), Finland (28.3%), Denmark (28.6%), Sweden (21% total). Although there is a growing trend to embrace cohabitation as a stable alternative to marriage, data shows that it is a less stable union: children born to cohabiting parents during the 1990s in Sweden were 75% more likely to experience family breakdown than children born to married parents<sup>22</sup>.

In Europe as a whole, there has been a notable decline in the crude marriage rate in almost all EU countries since 1970 and a simultaneous increase in the prevalence of other forms of couple

<sup>20</sup> For a fuller discussion of these claims, see the *Penumbra Effect*, Relationships Foundation, 2009.

<sup>21</sup> See Family Relationships Base Data Table, Appendix. Original Source of data: Eurostat

<sup>22</sup> Kennedy and Thomson, *Children's Experiences of family disruption in Sweden*, Abstract available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2991149/>. For further discussion of various family structures, see [www.marriagefoundation.org.uk](http://www.marriagefoundation.org.uk).

partnership.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, the decrease in proportion of first marriages suggests remarriage has increased and the variation in mean age at first marriage (25 years in Poland, 32 years in Switzerland) implies a change in approach to long-term partnerships. There has been an increase in crude divorce rate between 1970-2008 in all countries except for Estonia and Latvia (where divorce rates were high in 1970). The average duration of marriages at divorce across Europe is between 10 and 15 years. In Italy, Slovenia and Spain those marriages which end in divorce last up to 15 or more years, indicating slightly greater chance that family relationships will be more stable in these countries.

## **b) The Quality of Family Relationships**

Demographic data alone can only provide a partial snapshot of the quality of a given relationship. It is therefore helpful to look briefly at some indicators of the features of the relationship to better arrive at an estimation of their health.

### *i. High rates of domestic violence<sup>24</sup>*

Statistics regarding the number of marriages 'intact' in a country does not guarantee that these marriages are thriving. Indeed, over 25% of people in the Nordic countries (Denmark, Sweden, Finland), in France, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Belgium, Netherlands, and the UK, in Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Slovenia, Malta, and Cyprus claim to count a sufferer of domestic violence among their female relatives and friends. The quality of these couple relationships is clearly extremely low (N.B. the data does not give the partnership status of the sufferers). The wide spectrum of countries from a cultural and economic perspective suggests poor relational health for many couple relationships across Europe and the overall increase in domestic violence since 2008 highlights one damaging effect of the economic downturn on family relationships in Europe.

### *ii. Parent-child relationships*

Although a quantitative measure of the overall health of parent-child relationships is difficult to provide, the ease with which children talk openly with their parents surely indicates the presence of a healthy relationship. UNICEF data<sup>25</sup> shows that relationships are strong in the Netherlands, Iceland, Sweden, Denmark, Romania, Hungary, Finland, Spain, Estonia, and Poland, but not so strong in Norway, Portugal, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Belgium, Italy, Slovakia, and France. A further indicator of stable parent-child relationships is the number of children under 15 living with both parents<sup>26</sup>. (It is obvious that merely living together does not ensure relational stability, but the presence of two parents in the household generally creates a more stable environment in which the child can thrive). In the EU one out of six children live with one parent only, with the lowest percentages of two-parent families found in Belgium (65%), Estonia (66.8%), Latvia (64.9%) and the UK (68.9%). Finland, Greece, Turkey, Spain, Luxembourg, Italy and Malta have the highest percentages of two-parent families (above 90% of all families).

## **c) A wider perspective on 'family': considering intergenerational relationships**

Family policy often focuses on the nuclear family – that is, on two generations of parents and children. With the number of people over 79 years old in the EU expected to triple by 2060<sup>27</sup>, paying

<sup>23</sup> OECD, Family database and sf3.3

<sup>24</sup> OECD, Family database

<sup>25</sup> UNICEF 'Child Well-being in Rich Countries: A comparative overview', Florence, 2013.

<sup>26</sup> OECD, family database

<sup>27</sup> European Commission, *Long-term Care for the Elderly: provisions and providers in 33 European countries*, Rome, 2010

attention to the health of intergenerational relationships is of no small significance. Nevertheless, assessing the quality of these relationships is far from straightforward, as the data available reflects the complexity of the relationships.

*i. The 'shape' of intergenerational relationships differs across countries:*

In eastern and southern Member States other family arrangements with more than two adults are more common than in the rest of Europe – due in part to multigenerational households. In Bulgaria, Malta, Poland and Romania, over 40% of the households had three or more adults living together, either with or without children.<sup>28</sup> As far as contact between generations is concerned, More than 68% of adults in Cyprus, Italy, Malta, Hungary and Slovakia have face-to-face contact with their parents at least once a week. These countries also have the highest percentages of multi-generational households (between 40 and 50%) and the highest frequency of phone and email contact with parents.<sup>29</sup> In Denmark and Sweden it is more common for different generations to meet on a weekly or monthly basis; only a quarter or less meet their children every day, and in Sweden only around a third of the respondents meet their parents each week.<sup>30</sup>

Grandparents play a significant role in caring for grandchildren across Europe: 60% of grandmothers and 50% of grandfathers were involved in grandchild care at some level during 2011.<sup>31</sup> The probability of providing any child care at all was highest among Danish, Dutch, French, and Swedish grandparents, but they are least likely to offer very frequent help. The lowest proportion of grandparents who have any involvement in grandchild care is found in Spain and Italy. However, those grandparents who do help are likely to help more frequently (almost every week or more often).

*ii. Frequency of intergenerational contact has decreased since 2007*

Between 2007 and 2011, both direct and indirect contact decreased in Europe. The decline in telephone or email contact with family suggests that pressures on time as well as resources have resulted in diminished possibilities for contact. It appears that the decline in intergenerational contact is connected to economic strain, as it is attributed especially to people in the lower income quartiles, who were previously found to have more contact with their family than others.<sup>32</sup> Lower frequencies of indirect forms of contact were measured in 2011 than in 2007, not only with parents but also with children. There has been a 7% decline in the percentage of fathers who call their children at least weekly (70% of fathers in 2011 compared with 77% in 2007) and a 5% decline in the number of mothers who do the same (78% of mothers in 2011 compared with 83% in 2007). The *Third European Quality of Life Survey* found that there was an increase in internet contact with friends between 2007 and 2011, but no corresponding increase in family contact.<sup>33</sup> This suggests that connecting with family through the internet cannot replace the more direct (and expensive or time-consuming) forms of contact.

*iii. Frequent intergenerational contact is linked to geographical proximity, but not to people looking to family as their main source of support.*

In Germany, France, Austria, and Switzerland roughly 50 per cent of all parents have at least one child living at a distance of less than 25 km (but not living in the same household or building). This

<sup>28</sup> *European Quality of Life Survey 3, Quality of Life in Europe, Impact Since the Crisis*, p69

<sup>29</sup> *European Quality of Life Survey 3, Quality of Life in Europe, Impact Since the Crisis* p70

<sup>30</sup> *European Quality of Life Survey 3, Quality of Life in Europe, Impact Since the Crisis*, p70.

<sup>31</sup> *European Quality of Life Survey 3, Quality of Life in Europe, Impact Since the Crisis*, p71

<sup>32</sup> *European Quality of Life Survey 3, Quality of Life in Europe, Impact Since the Crisis*, Table 17

<sup>33</sup> *Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) summary brochure*. Available at <http://www.share-project.org/>

figure rises to more than 60 per cent in Denmark, the Netherlands, and Sweden. Similarly high shares of parents in these countries report having at least weekly (though not daily) contact with a child. As mentioned above, the Mediterranean countries report higher levels of multi-generational households and more frequent contact. One might expect the countries with the highest rates of frequent contact between generations and the smallest geographical distance between generations to report the highest percentage of people who turn to family as their primary support in times of difficulty. Nevertheless, no such obvious correlation seems to exist: Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Malta, Hungary and Slovakia all report very frequent intergenerational contact; Denmark and Sweden report the least frequent contact, yet there is little apparent difference in how likely people in these countries are to turn to their families for support.<sup>34</sup>

*iv. Primary reliance on family (rather than on institutions) for support has decreased since 2007. Nevertheless, family is still the primary source of support in all countries.*<sup>35</sup>

People are most likely to turn to family for help in the Eastern Member States and least likely in Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland and the UK. This may be linked to the existence of a comprehensive welfare system in these latter countries. In some countries the importance of family increased when needing money (especially in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania).

*v. High levels of reciprocity of financial gifts and of 'gifts in kind' imply a degree of relational health* Financial transfers of €250 or more were predominantly given by parents (aged over 50) to their children,<sup>36</sup> and the most generous parents are in the Scandinavian countries. Mediterranean parents give the least to their children financially. This may be indicative of the relative financial status of the parents in question in these countries, rather than of relational poverty or indifference.

In the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands and Switzerland, parents and children offer similar levels of instrumental help (e.g. with personal care, eating, household chores or paperwork) to each other. In Germany, Austria, Greece and Spain far more older parents receive than give this kind of help. This indicator is perhaps more significant in gauging the quality of relationship, as it principally involves the giver and receiver spending time together.

*vi. Subjective measures regarding the perception of intergenerational relational health paint a mixed picture.*

In general, the lowest perceived levels of social exclusion are among older people. The age group 65+ report lowest perceived levels of social exclusion across the EU27 and EU15, but higher in EU12<sup>37</sup> However, the degree of loneliness experienced increases with age. The highest levels of feeling lonely are reported in Greece and Italy, and the lowest levels in Denmark, Finland, Ireland and the Netherlands. Loneliness is strongly experienced by those who have lost a partner (on a scale of 0–5, it is 1.62 for the separated, divorced or widowed, and 0.65 for the married or living with partner). N.B. A higher level of loneliness is not necessarily correlated with other negative indicators such as feeling downhearted or anxious.<sup>38</sup>

The perception of tension between young and old does not seem to be linked to infrequent intergenerational contact, or the age of the respondent. This may suggest that there is a wider

<sup>34</sup> The average percentages of people likely to turn to family for support are as follows: Slovakia, 93%; Spain, 91.2%; Hungary, 89.4%; Sweden, 87.2%; Italy, 84.8%; EU27, 83.6%; Malta, 83.4%; Denmark, 74.6%; Cyprus, 74.4%. Figures are an average for each country across all domains in Table 15 of the *Third European Quality of Life Survey*.

<sup>35</sup> *Third European Quality of Life Survey* Table 15

<sup>36</sup> *SHARE* summary brochure

<sup>37</sup> *European Quality of Life Survey 3, Quality of Life in Europe, Impact Since the Crisis*, p84

<sup>38</sup> *European Quality of Life Survey 3, Quality of Life in Europe, Impact Since the Crisis*



question here about the quality of intergenerational relationships in the wider community, rather than limited only to the family. The highest levels are found in Hungary (26%), Cyprus (24%), and Romania (22%), and lowest in Denmark (2%), Finland (5%) and Ireland (5%). Somewhat surprisingly, the countries with the highest levels report frequent intergenerational contact, and those with low perceived tension levels report less frequent contact. Interestingly, this latter group of countries also reports low levels of loneliness. This implies that frequent intergenerational contact alone does not ensure for peaceful relationships between young and old on a wider societal level, or greater fulfilment in family relationships.

*vii. Family members remain the primary caregivers where care of the elderly is concerned*

Informal care givers, i.e. family and friends, remain the most important group of providers. Of the expected 20.7 million dependent elderly estimated for the whole of the EU in 2007, 8.4 million are estimated to have benefited from formal care in 2007, while 12.3 million received informal or no care.<sup>39</sup> In practically all countries, spouses and partners are the main care givers for co-residing older people. In half of the countries for which detailed information is available (Austria, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Poland) spouses are equally likely to care for one another. Progress is being made towards a rebalancing of institutional and home-based care. West, Nordic and South European countries all have similarly modest coverage rates<sup>40</sup> for residential care, suggesting that intergenerational relationships across Europe are currently strong enough to cope with the strain of caring for an elderly or infirm relative. As the population ages, however, this will be put under increasing tension.

The highest and lowest values of people in residential care are recorded by Iceland and the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia with 8.3% and 0.2%, respectively. Towards the top of the ranking, France, Belgium and the Netherlands have rates just above 6%. Immediately below, Sweden, Norway, Slovenia and Luxembourg record values between 5% and 6%, followed by Austria, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Slovakia, and the UK with values between 2.5% and 5%. At the bottom of the ranking, Turkey and Greece join a group of 7 East European countries – Estonia, Croatia, Latvia, Poland, Lithuania, Romania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – all of which record rates below 2%. There are significant inter-country differences in home and semi-residential care coverage. Home care coverage of (in-kind only) services is almost double in Sweden with respect to Italy despite the fact that in 2009 Italy was the oldest country in Europe after Germany. It has been suggested that the marked increase of home care in Sweden since the 1990s is a result of the previous recession. This could be seen as a positive relational outcome of a previous economic crisis.

Informal family care is common in most countries when care is given less than daily, such as Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland and Sweden. In all these countries except France and Belgium, 80% or more of the elderly receiving care rely exclusively on the family, while only 20% resort to formal, hence paid, care services (on an exclusive basis or in combination with family care).

<sup>39</sup> European Commission, *Ageing Report*, p148

<sup>40</sup> Coverage rates are defined as the proportion of beneficiaries of long-term care provisions in the population of elderly people (more than 65 years old). E.g. If there are 20 people and the coverage rate for residential care is 10%, this is equal to 2 old people in a care home.

## Summary discussion of findings by country group

### Western European Countries

*Germany, the Netherlands, the UK, France, Belgium, Austria, Luxembourg, Switzerland*

#### **Community relationships**

The Netherlands fares particularly well in this group as far as community relationships are concerned if we take subjective perceptions of community wellbeing as our starting point: there was a notable increase in frequency of contact with neighbours; a low percentage of people who rarely or never socialise; high levels of participation in voluntary work and high levels of trust in other people. It seems that community relationships are particularly strong in this country, although a significant majority perceive ethnic discrimination to be widespread, suggesting that this is an area for particular focus. As a whole, data for the region suggest lower levels of community relational health than in the Nordic countries, and lower quality neighbour relationships than in Southern Europe. Community relational health, as demonstrated in reported levels of trust in others and frequency of social contact seems to be better in Western Europe than in Southern and Eastern Europe. However, some notable exceptions to this assertion stand out: the marked increase in many Western European countries of tension between rich and poor, and the low levels of trust in other people in Germany suggests that the economic crisis is causing considerable strain even in countries which have felt the financial impact less keenly.

#### **Family relationships**

It is difficult to generalise about the health of family relationships for this group of countries. Marriage rates vary from 3.9 marriages per 1000 persons in France (0.5 lower than the EU27 average) to 4.7 in Germany. Divorce rates range from well below average in Ireland (0.7 per 1000 persons, likely due to the country's Catholic heritage and relatively late introduction of legal divorce) to the highest rate in Europe (3 divorces per 1000 persons) in Belgium. Cohabitation rates are low in Belgium, but range from 11.4% to 22.2% for the other countries in this group, with all countries clustered together in the data set in terms of comparative rank. Fertility rates and live births outside of marriage vary, but the highest percentages of births outside of marriage are found in France (55.8%), Belgium (50%), the UK (47.3%) and the Netherlands. The percentage in other countries is slightly lower than the EU27 average. In general, figures for these countries demonstrate roughly similar attitudes to family formation across the region.

This suggests a fair degree of relational health for the families in the region, although a general decline in marriage and fertility rates, combined with a general incline in divorce, cohabitation and births outside of marriage presents a warning for longer-term family stability across the region. Even if this is true on the whole, the quality of nuclear family relationships varies, as demonstrated by the range of people with a domestic violence sufferer in their friendship or family group (from 16% in Germany to 38% in the UK) and the depth of the parent-child relationship (the Netherlands has the highest percentage of all countries surveyed of children who talk easily with their parents, whereas France has the lowest of all countries). The image of intergenerational health for the region is similarly difficult to define: roughly half of all elders have an adult child living close by in most countries; the region boasts high levels of home-based care if it is less than daily; and the lowest levels of intergenerational tension and loneliness in Europe are reported in Ireland and the Netherlands. These indicators suggest that intergenerational relationships enjoy a fair degree of health in Western Europe. However, the relatively large proportion of elderly people in residential care across the region when compared with other European regions may highlight a collective preference for lower relational costs as far as elderly care is concerned, or it may be a product of the well-developed institutional elderly care in these countries (although the ageing population is



causing a notable degree of strain on state care in some Western European countries). However, the high coverage rates of residential care for Western Europe compared with the Nordic countries, where there is also a developed welfare state, suggests that the former conclusion may hold some weight.

### **Workplace relationships**

Indicators of workplace relational health are mixed for the region. Low levels of management-worker tension in Germany and the UK and comparatively low unemployment rates in Germany, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Belgium, (although these rates are still higher than in the early 2000s) underline positive aspects of workplace relationships. Relatively low youth unemployment means the outlook is positive for the long-term health of workplace, family and community relationships. There are some warning signs, however: high income inequality in the UK could result in increased tension between management and workers, rich and poor, employed and unemployed. Extremely high numbers of working days were lost to strikes in the UK and France in 2007, which may undermine the more positive subjective assessment of the health of management-worker relationships in these countries (although in both cases, the majority of strikes were held by public sector workers, indicating that the relational strain is between the workers and the government rather than their direct managers). High levels of unsocial working hours are common in many Western countries, including the Netherlands, the UK, and Germany. This will inevitably lead to poorer quality workplace relationships, as well as impact on family and community relationships. Other effects (e.g. health problems, stress) will have indirect consequences for relationships.

### Southern European Countries:

*Greece, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Turkey, Cyprus, Malta*

**Community Relationships** between neighbours seem to be strong when compared with the rest of Europe, especially in Greece, Portugal and Spain. These countries report the highest levels of neighbour interaction and the greatest improvements on this front between 1994 and 2000. Unfortunately, more recent data is not yet available to indicate the effect of the economic crisis on these relationships. Despite these encouraging findings, there is some indication that the crisis has taken its toll on other, wider community relationships: Greece and Portugal report the lowest levels of trust in Europe; Greece and Cyprus report high levels of perceived ethnic discrimination; there has been an overall increase in perceived societal tension. Apart from in Greece, the percentages of people who rarely or never spend time with friends is significantly higher than average in Southern European countries. The decline in total crime rates between 2002 and 2009 may suggest actual improvements in community relational health in the region, even if people perceive tension to be relatively high.

**Workplace Relationships** are currently under significant strain in Southern Europe, and prospects for future relational health do not appear positive. This is clearly linked to the economic recession and is an area which urgently needs attention in the management of the crisis in this region. All indicators suggest high levels of relational breakdown in the workplace: high levels of tension between management and workers, high levels of income inequality and a high number of working days lost to strikes. Very high overall and youth unemployment rates for the region may have serious relational consequences for the future across workplace, community and family relationships.

### **Family Relationships**

Above average marriage rates suggest that people in Turkey, Cyprus, Malta and Greece aspire to stable family formation, and divorce rates in all of these countries except Cyprus are lower than the EU27 average, suggesting that there is a degree of relational stability. This group of countries counts the highest percentages of two-parent families in Europe (above 90%), another indicator of

relational stability. Perhaps surprisingly given the importance traditionally attributed to the wider family in Mediterranean cultures, marriage rates in Italy, Spain and Portugal are significantly lower than average, indicating a cultural shift away from traditional (and more stable) forms of partnership. Nevertheless, the mean duration for marriages in Italy and Spain is higher than the EU average (although still only fifteen years' duration). The higher than average divorce rates in Spain and Portugal also indicate a degree of relational breakdown in a family context. These two countries have the highest cohabitation rates for the group, which further suggests a move towards more 'fluid' forms of partnership. Given the evidence for a higher probability of partnership breakdown between cohabiters, these countries would do well to invest in relationships education which promotes the formation of long-term, stable family structures.

The difference between numbers of reported domestic violence sufferers within this country group (from 16% of Italian respondents claiming to count a domestic violence victim among their friends or relatives to 31% of Cypriots) suggests that the quality of partner relationships varies across this region. Similarly, the percentage of children who find it easy to talk with their parents varies, from high figures in Greece, and Spain, indicating healthy relationships, to lower numbers in Portugal and Italy.

As far as intergenerational relationships are concerned, Southern European countries generally report frequent direct or indirect contact and geographical proximity between parents and adult children, and high levels of participation in elderly care. Nevertheless, elderly people also report the highest levels of loneliness and age-based tension in Europe, perhaps implying that more needs to be done to deepen the relationships between generations. Contact and proximity, although important, are not enough to establish flourishing relationships.

## Eastern European Countries and the Baltic States

*Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia*

### **Community Relationships**

Community relationships seem to be strained in the Eastern European countries and the Baltic States when compared with other European regions. Few people express high levels of trust in others in several countries (Hungary, the Czech Republic, Estonia, and Slovakia) and there is little trust in institutions across the region. The region has seen the greatest rise in societal tension when measured across several different categories – between young and old, management and workers, rich and poor, although the perceived levels of ethnic tension are comparatively low. Volunteering is not common in Eastern Europe, which may indicate a lack of willingness to contribute to the collective wellbeing of a community, or it may be that the communist legacy of the region does not predispose people to participate in voluntary work. On a positive note, the Baltic States have seen a fall in recorded crime over recent years, although the homicide rate is still extremely high.

### **Workplace Relationships**

It is difficult to draw generalised conclusions regarding the health of this relationship category across the region, as different indicators show a variety of results. As far as unemployment is concerned, however, rates for total and youth unemployment are higher than average across much of Eastern Europe and the Baltic states, including in Lithuania, Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia and Slovakia, threatening the health of future workplace relationships, as well as present family and community relationships. There is some level of tension between management and workers, especially in Slovenia. It is perhaps surprising that other countries do not report higher levels of management-worker tension, given the high levels of income inequality in Latvia, Bulgaria, and Romania. Income inequality is low in Slovenia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, suggesting, for Slovenia at least, that the source of tension lies elsewhere. Few strikes take place across the region, which may be a sign of

overall relational health, or it may be that industrial action is not in keeping with the region's communist heritage.

## **Family Relationships**

Once again, drawing overall conclusions for family relationships in Eastern Europe and the Baltic states is not easy from the data included in this report. Marriage rates are higher than the European average in Poland, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia, near to average in the Czech Republic and Latvia, and lower than average in Estonia, Bulgaria and Slovenia (these latter two countries have the lowest rates for countries with available data). Divorce rates are similarly diverse. Notably, Slovenia and Bulgaria have the highest divorce rates for the group, which implies that family breakdown is common in the two countries. The percentage of respondents who count domestic violence sufferers among their friends and relatives is extremely high in the Baltic States, indicating a severe level of relational breakdown. It has been suggested<sup>41</sup> that joblessness, addiction and situations of stress or conflict are behind these figures. Eastern European families face a particular challenge to strong relationships: the assumption dating back to the communist era that children will 'fare better in the orphanage'<sup>42</sup>; this leads to very high levels of child abandonment. At the other end of life, intergenerational relationships between the elderly and their offspring seem fairly strong, with multi-generational households common across the region and people most likely to turn to family for support. There are high levels of grandparent involvement in the care of grandchildren which has led experts<sup>43</sup> to suggest financial provision be made for this care through family policy.

## The Nordic Countries

*Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Iceland*

## **Community Relationships**

Data would suggest that, in general, people in the Nordic countries favour community relationships where there is a greater element of choice involved in the establishment of the association: they have the strongest friendships in Europe and the highest rates of participation in voluntary activities. Nevertheless, the relationships which may occur as a result of circumstance or geographical location tend to be weaker than in other parts of Europe: there has been a decline in Finland and Denmark in the percentage of people who regularly talk to their neighbours, and across the region a substantial number of people perceive high levels of interethnic tension. Furthermore, there was an increase in violent crime between 2006 and 2009 in all countries except Norway, which may hint at a level of relational disintegration on a wider community level. (Comparatively speaking, however, the Nordic countries still boast low levels of violent crime).

## **Workplace Relationships**

Several of the contributing factors conducive to healthy workplace relationships are present in the Nordic countries: the region boasts the lowest levels of management-worker tension, the lowest levels of income inequality and below average numbers of days lost to strikes. Unemployment rates are below the average for Europe although youth unemployment is only 1% below average in Sweden), suggesting that, while not negligible, the long-term consequences will be less severe for this region.

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/transport/?doc=57412>

<sup>42</sup> *Family Policy in Eastern Europe: Developments and Recommendations*. Mihaela Robila. UN, date unknown (post 2007). Accessed at <http://social.un.org/index/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=iAHijJbAWiM%3D&tabid=215>

<sup>43</sup> *Family Policy in Eastern Europe*, p7

### Family Relationships

As far as family indicators are concerned, the most interesting data for the Nordic countries concerns cohabitation and family stability. Cohabitation has long been popular, especially in Sweden, with 21% of respondents of all ages forming part of a cohabiting partnership in 2006-07 (highest in Europe). 54.3% of live births in 2011 were to cohabiting parents. Historically, there has been widespread acceptance of cohabitation in Sweden. Accordingly, cohabiting parents have similar responsibilities and rights as married parents and family policy does not usually distinguish between married and unmarried parents as far as access to welfare is concerned (Kennedy and Thompson, 2010). Although family dissolution rates for cohabiting couples are lower in the region than in much of Europe, data still shows that it is a less stable union than marriage and children born to cohabiting parents are more likely to experience family breakdown than children born to married parents. The proportion of children born to cohabiting parents has increased steadily since 1970 and family dissolution for both marriage and cohabitation has increased during the same period. Indeed, the region has relatively low marriage rates and relatively high divorce rates.

UNICEF's child wellbeing report indicates that parent-child relationships are healthy as a whole in the region: Iceland, Sweden, Denmark and Finland follow the Netherlands with the highest percentages of children who feel happy talking with their parents. However, the quality of many couple relationships in the Nordic countries seems to be threatened the prevalence of domestic violence: between 33 and 39% of respondents report having a victim among their friends and relatives in Denmark, Finland and Sweden, and percentages have increased since 1999. Indicators suggest that intergenerational relationships are strong: although contact is less frequent than in other regions, there is a high level of grandparent involvement, a generous exchange of financial and other gifts, a high degree of family support and home-based care for the elderly. Subjective indicators, such as levels of loneliness and perceived intergenerational tension, also suggest that people in the Nordic countries make a positive assessment of the health of these relationships.

### Implications for Policy: Are we building a relational environment?

If we are concerned about the relational state of Europe we need to think about whether economic and cultural factors tend to foster or undermine the relationships that are considered to be important for wellbeing and 'progress'. In doing this we can consider:

#### **i) Whether people can give relationships the time they need: the impact of long and unsocial working hours and long commuting times.**

Long working hours limit time for relational interaction in a wide variety of domains: family (parent-child/with spouse/intergenerational); community involvement (e.g. in a formal or informal recreational or religious group, performing some kind of voluntary community service); with friends (42% of long hours workers felt their working hours had damaged friendships, CIPD 2001); possibility to serve e.g. in local politics or lobby groups. Furthermore, it has been shown that long working hours can be damaging to health<sup>44</sup> and the likelihood of injury increases with the number of hours of overtime worked. Musculoskeletal injuries are common, as is work-related stress. These work-induced health issues will have implicit relational costs.

Excessive commuting time or an overly stressful commute can have similar negative relational effects as long working hours. Commuting times are consistently high across Europe, with more than

<sup>44</sup> Dembe, A.E., 2005, *The impact of occupational injuries and illnesses on families*, in Bianchi, S. Casper, L.M. and Berkowitz King, R. (eds.), *Work, family, health and well-being*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

65% of all workers spending more than 20 minutes travelling to and from work. Figures are particularly high in Germany, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and The Netherlands. In all of these countries, average working hours for full-time workers are at least 39.6 hours per week. Only in Greece, Italy, Poland and Portugal do fewer than 70% of workers spend over 20 minutes commuting to and from work.

A Dutch study<sup>45</sup> (Van Zwieten et al, 2011) found that employees who routinely worked overtime or who worked shifts were more likely to report being emotionally exhausted and more likely to be overweight or obese. Employees who routinely worked overtime, in shifts, or in the evening and at night were also more likely to have accidents at work and more likely to neglect family activities because of work. They were also more likely to omit or neglect duties at work because of family responsibilities. The relational cost of excessive or unsocial working hours is clear: where too high expectations are placed on workers (either by themselves, by financial necessity, by managers or through peer pressure) with regards to time spent at work, both family and workplace relationships suffer. It is also likely that productivity decreases due to increased likelihood of injury.

## ii) The impact of financial strain on relationships

The *Family Pressure Gauge*<sup>46</sup> has demonstrated that money worries are a major source of relationship conflict. In the UK, 10.7 million people suffer relationship problems as a result of money worries<sup>47</sup> and it is likely that a similar amount of strain is experienced by those with financial difficulties in other countries. This is of particular note, as 45% of Europeans report experiencing some difficulty in making ends meet<sup>48</sup> and the highest percentages (above 70% of the total population) are found in Greece, Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, and Latvia.<sup>49</sup> It is conceivable that such high degrees of financial hardship will affect the relational health of communities, increasing tension levels between rich and poor and decreasing levels of trust, and of workplace relationships, particularly where there are also high levels of inequality.

## iii) Whether people's connection to place encourages high levels of relational health

Having the possibility to move house can have notable relational benefits, such as closer proximity to family or friends, greater opportunities for job security and better working conditions (bringing the associated relational benefits as discussed above), or establishing oneself as part of a flourishing community. Nonetheless, excessive residential mobility, whether through choice or force of circumstances, can have adverse effects for the social and relational stability of a neighbourhood, workplace or family. Countries with high levels of mobility (especially the Nordic countries—29% in Iceland, 23% in Sweden, 21% in Norway, 19% in Finland, 18% in Denmark)<sup>50</sup> should take particular note of the possible relational cost.

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/ewco/2012/01/NL1201029I.htm>

<sup>46</sup> Available to download at [www.relationshipsfoundation.org](http://www.relationshipsfoundation.org)

<sup>47</sup> *Family Pressure Gauge*, p 21, citing *Breakdown Britain*, CSJ, p19.

<sup>48</sup> *Third European Quality of Life Survey*, p39

<sup>49</sup> *Third European Quality of Life Survey*, p40

<sup>50</sup> Caldera Sánchez, A. and D. Andrews (2011), "To Move or not to Move: What Drives Residential Mobility Rates in the OECD?" *OECD Economics Department Working Papers*, No. 846, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5kgh7c7kzx21-en>.

## Concluding remarks

Attempting to assess the quality of relationships in Europe as a whole is extremely difficult, and this study has only undertaken an initial and very generalised effort based on a limited number of indicators. From the data explored here, it appears that wider community relationships have been tested by the economic crisis, leading to a decline in trust in other people and increased tension between various social groups. Nonetheless, there are some positive indications that community relationships are not undergoing as severe a breakdown as one might expect: Europeans are still involved in contributing to community cohesion through voluntary and social activities; perceived levels of ethnic discrimination, although high, are declining. This is particularly promising given the high levels of work-related migration across Europe, and gives hope for the future relational stability of an increasingly multi-cultural Europe.

Much has been written elsewhere about the changes occurring in the structure of nuclear families. The general trend towards the formation of partnerships which have been proven to be less stable than their traditional alternatives signals a warning for the wellbeing of both the partners involved and any children they may have. The cost of family breakdown to society as a whole, both on an economic and a relational level cannot be ignored. In spite of this breakdown, relatively high percentages of children in many (although not all) countries across Europe say that they can talk openly with their parents, indicating high levels of trust in parent-child relationships. Conversely, the increase in domestic violence rates suggests that the health of many spouse/partnership relationships is under severe strain. As one of the leading contributors to strained couple relationships is financial hardship, it is not difficult to imagine the long-term relational consequences of the on-going economic downturn. More positively, intergenerational relationships within families seem to be stronger across most of Europe than expected, especially when considering the proportion of grandparents involved in grandchild care, and the proportion of home-based elderly care given by family members. There are, however, some warning signs from subjective indicators of the quality of intergenerational relationships in the wider community, with increased levels of tension between young and old reported in some countries, and the highest levels of loneliness experienced by the older generation.

The quality of workplace relationships and the impact that this has on wider community and family relationships is of particular interest, given the threats posed to them by the increased unemployment rates and the number of people forced to work unsocial hours or in temporary positions since 2008. The long-term effects of youth unemployment, such as the increased likelihood of unemployment at a later age, lower earnings potential, health problems, increased risk of delinquency and criminal activity, and decreased political and social involvement<sup>51</sup> all carry consequences for the quality of family and community relationships. Countries with high levels of income inequality need to beware the potential future breakdown of wider community relationships, as well as workplace relationships, as these countries also report the highest levels of tension between rich and poor. Given that unemployment and inequality levels have risen across most of Europe since the advent of the recession, careful attention needs to be paid to the impact that any recovery or austerity measures will have on all three types of relationship.

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<sup>51</sup> Lee et al, The Work Foundation, *Short-term Crisis – long-term problem? Addressing the youth employment challenge*, June 2012.



**Appendix - Community Relationships Base Data Ranking**  
**(Comparative Crime Statistics)**

Homicide Rate per 100,000 population, average per year (2007-09), by country and major city			
Iceland	0.32	Reykjavik	0.50
Austria	0.54	Vienna	1.07
Norway	0.65	Oslo	1.61
Switzerland	0.66	Berne	0.81
Slovenia	0.79	Ljubliana	0.49
Germany	0.89	Berlin	1.93
Spain	0.96	Madrid	1.14
Czech Republic	1.00	Prague	2.74
Netherlands	1.05	Amsterdam	3.65
Sweden	1.05	Stockholm	:
Italy	1.10	Rome	1.20
Malta	1.14	Valetta	0.00
Greece	1.22	Athens	1.98
UK: England & Wales	1.25	London	1.92
France	1.27	Paris	1.40
Poland	1.29	Warsaw	1.85
Luxembourg	1.31	Luxembourg	4.24
Portugal	1.38	Lisbon	0.48
Hungary	1.40	Budapest	1.55
Denmark	1.42	Copenhagen	1.81
UK: Northern Ireland	1.47	Belfast	1.74
Croatia	1.47	Zagreb	1.10
Cyprus	1.52	Lefkosia	0.85
Slovakia	1.65	Bratislava	2.65
Belgium	1.87	Brussels	3.09
Liechtenstein	1.88	Vaduz	0.00
UK: Scotland	1.89	Edinburgh	1.55
FYRO Macedonia	1.91	Skopje	3.23
Ireland	2.02	Dublin	2.33
Romania	2.06	Bucharest	1.01
Bulgaria	2.14	Sofia	2.05
Finland	2.36	Helsinki	1.76
Montenegro	3.02	Podgorica	4.73
Turkey	4.16	Ankara	4.03
Estonia	5.74	Talinn	6.03
Lithuania	8.31	Vilnius	7.90
Latvia	:	Riga	:

Feeling unsafe or very unsafe on the street after dark, % 2004-2005	
Average	25
Iceland	6
Finland	14
Norway	14
Denmark	17
Netherlands	18
Austria	19
Sweden	19
France	21
Belgium	26
Hungary	26
Ireland	27
Germany	30
United Kingdom	31
Poland	33
Spain	33
Portugal	34
Italy	35
Luxembourg	36
Greece	42

## Work Indicators Base Data Ranking

	Hours worked per week of full-time employment, 2011		People who take more than 20 minutes to travel to place of work or study, % individuals, 2005		Population in employment usually working in the evening or at night, % of total employment, 2009		Unemployment Rate Less than 25 yrs, % of total labour force, 2012		Unemployment Rate 25-74 years, % total labour force, 2012		Gini Co-efficients, 2011		Number of days lost to strikes (1000), 2007
Denmark	38.9	Portugal	67	Cyprus	2.8	Germany	8.2	Norway	2.3	Norway	22.9	Latvia	0.0
Norway	39.0	Greece	69	Iceland	4.5	Norway	8.6	Luxembourg	4.1	Iceland	23.6	Iceland	0.0
Ireland	39.6	Italy	69	Hungary	6.6	Netherlands	9.5	Netherlands	4.5	Slovenia	23.8	Slovakia	0.0
Lithuania	39.6	Poland	69	Latvia	6.7	Iceland	13.6	Iceland	4.5	Sweden	24.4	Malta	0.7
Finland	40.2	Slovenia	71	Poland	6.7	Denmark	14.1	Malta	4.9	Czech Republic	25.2	Norway	4.0
Italy	40.4	Czech Republic	74	Czech Republic	7.2	Malta	15.0	Germany	5.2	Slovakia	25.7	Ireland	6.0
Luxembourg	40.5	Ireland	74	Portugal	7.4	Luxembourg	18.0	Romania	5.6	Netherlands	25.8	Cyprus	8.4
Latvia	40.6	Hungary	74	Norway	7.9	Finland	19.0	Sweden	5.7	Finland	25.8	Lithuania	9.6
Hungary	40.6	Spain	75	Bulgaria	8.5	Belgium	19.1	United Kingdom	5.7	Belgium	26.3	Sweden	13.7
Estonia	40.8	Malta	75	Lithuania	8.8	Czech Republic	19.5	Czech Republic	6.0	Hungary	26.8	Netherlands	26.4
Romania	40.8	Finland	75	Belgium	9.2	Estonia	20.9	Finland	6.1	Luxembourg	27.2	Hungary	27.9
Sweden	40.8	Bulgaria	76	Denmark	9.4	United Kingdom	21.0	Belgium	6.3	Malta	27.4	Portugal	29.9
Netherlands	40.9	Cyprus	76	Ireland	9.8	Slovenia	21.8	Denmark	6.3	Denmark	27.8	Denmark	91.7
France	41.2	Belgium	77	Luxembourg	10.2	Romania	22.7	Slovenia	7.9	Germany	29.0	Finland	94.6
Bulgaria	41.3	Denmark	77	Sweden	10.2	Sweden	23.7	Poland	8.5	Cyprus	29.1	Belgium	127.4
Belgium	41.4	France	77	Italy	10.5	France	24.7	France	8.7	France	30.8	Poland	186.2
Malta	41.4	United Kingdom	77	Estonia	11.7	Lithuania	26.4	Estonia	8.9	Poland	31.1	Germany	286.4
Slovakia	41.5	Luxembourg	78	France	11.7	Poland	26.5	Italy	8.9	Estonia	31.9	Romania	494.0
Spain	41.6	Romania	78	Spain	12.2	Cyprus	26.8	Hungary	9.6	Italy	31.9	Italy	929.7
Slovenia	41.8	Slovakia	79	Romania	12.9	Bulgaria	27.9	Cyprus	10.5	Lithuania	32.9	United Kingdom	1,041.1
Germany	41.9	Sweden	79	Malta	13.2	Hungary	28.1	Bulgaria	11.0	United Kingdom	33.0	Spain	1,187.7
Cyprus	42.0	Netherlands	81	Slovenia	14.3	Latvia	28.4	Lithuania	12.1	Romania	33.2	France	1,553.0
Poland	42.1	Lithuania	82	Finland	15.1	Ireland	30.6	Slovakia	12.1	Greece	33.5	Bulgaria	:
Czech Republic	42.2	Latvia	83	Germany	17.4	Slovakia	34.5	Ireland	13.0	Spain	34.0	Czech Republic	:
Portugal	42.4	Estonia	85	Greece	17.6	Italy	35.3	Latvia	13.5	Portugal	34.2	Greece	:
United Kingdom	42.8	Germany	88	United Kingdom	17.7	Portugal	37.7	Portugal	14.0	Bulgaria	35.1	Luxembourg	:
Greece	43.7	Iceland	:	Slovakia	18.8	Spain	53.2	Greece	22.2	Latvia	35.4	Estonia	:
		Norway	:	Netherlands	20.9	Greece	55.4	Spain	22.7	Ireland	:	Estonia	:



## Family Relationships Base Data Ranking

	F1: Marriage Rates (per 1000 persons), 2010		F2: Divorce Rates, per 1000 persons, 2009		F3: Cohabitation Rate, % population aged 20-34, 2000-2007		F4: Total fertility rate (Number of children per woman), 2010		F5: Live births outside of marriage (% of total births), 2011		F6: Overall child wellbeing, UNICEF ranking, 2000-2009*		F7: Respondents who say they have a female friend or family member who has suffered domestic violence, % total respondents, 2010		F8: % of children who live with both father and mother in the same household, 2007
EU27	4.4	EU27	1.9	EU27	:	EU27	1.60	EU27	39.5	EU27	:	EU27	25	Average	83.1
Turkey	8.0	FYRO Macedonia	0.6	Turkey	0.0	Iceland	2.20	Greece	7.4	Netherlands	1	Bulgaria	11	Finland	95.2
Cyprus	7.3	Ireland	0.7	Malta	0.8	Ireland	2.07	FYRO Macedonia	11.6	Norway	2	Germany	16	Greece	93.6
FYRO Macedonia	6.9	Montenegro	0.7	Slovakia	1.7	Turkey	2.04	Croatia	14.0	Iceland	3	Italy	16	Italy	92.1
Malta	6.2	Italy	0.9	Poland	1.9	France	2.03	Cyprus	16.9	Finland	4	Czech Republic	17	Spain	91.5
Poland	6.0	Slovenia	1.1	Cyprus	2.1	Sweden	1.98	Switzerland	19.3	Sweden	5	Slovakia	17	Luxembourg	91.5
Montenegro	5.9	Croatia	1.1	Bulgaria	2.8	United Kingdom	1.98	Poland	21.2	Germany	6	Hungary	20	Turkey	91.5
Lithuania	5.7	Greece	1.2	Italy	3.0	Norway	1.95	Malta	22.7	Luxembourg	7	Austria	20	Malta	90.0
Denmark	5.6	Bulgaria	1.5	Greece	3.1	Denmark	1.87	Italy	23.4	Switzerland	8	Portugal	21	Romania	88.9
Finland	5.6	Romania	1.5	Czech Republic	4.2	Finland	1.87	Liechtenstein	23.5	Belgium	9	Romania	22	Slovenia	87.7
Switzerland	5.5	Turkey	1.6	Belgium	5.2	Belgium	1.86	Lithuania	30.0	Ireland	10	Spain	23	Netherlands	87.4
Romania	5.4	Poland	1.7	Spain	5.5	Netherlands	1.79	Romania	30.0	Denmark	11	Greece	25	Austria	86.6
Sweden	5.3	Iceland	1.7	Portugal	5.9	Montenegro	1.69	Ireland	33.7	Slovenia	12	France	25	Portugal	86.6
Greece	5.0	Netherlands	1.9	Latvia	6.3	Estonia	1.63	Germany	33.9	France	13	Ireland	26	Slovakia	86.4
Liechtenstein	5.0	France	2.0	Romania	7.4	Luxembourg	1.63	Slovakia	34.0	Czech Republic	14	Slovenia	28	Bulgaria	85.2
Iceland	4.9	United Kingdom	2.0	Lithuania	8.3	Slovenia	1.57	Luxembourg	34.1	Portugal	15	Malta	30	Switzerland <sup>4</sup>	84.7
Norway	4.8	Spain	2.1	Slovenia	8.8	FYRO Macedonia	1.56	Spain	37.4	United Kingdom	16	Cyprus	31	Germany	82.0
Croatia	4.8	Luxembourg	2.1	Luxembourg	11.4	Lithuania	1.55	Austria	40.4	Austria	18	Luxembourg	31	Hungary	82.0
Germany	4.7	Norway	2.1	Hungary	11.5	Switzerland	1.52	Finland	40.9	Spain	19	Denmark	33	Poland	82.0
Slovakia	4.7	Cyprus	2.2	Switzerland	12.3	Greece	1.51	Czech Republic	41.8	Hungary	20	Belgium	34	Denmark	81.3
Ireland	4.6	Austria	2.2	Ireland	13.4	Bulgaria	1.49	Hungary	42.3	Poland	21	Netherlands	35	Czech Republic	80.8
Netherlands	4.5	Germany	2.3	Germany	13.6	Czech Republic	1.49	Portugal	42.8	Italy	22	Poland	36	France	79.5
Austria	4.5	Latvia	2.3	Austria	13.7	Croatia	1.46	Latvia	44.6	Estonia	23	Finland	38	Sweden	78.0
United Kingdom	4.5	Slovakia	2.3	France	21.8	Cyprus	1.44	Netherlands	45.3	Slovakia	23	United Kingdom	38	Lithuania	72.4
Czech Republic	4.4	Estonia	2.4	Netherlands	21.9	Austria	1.44	United Kingdom	47.3	Greece	25	Estonia	39	United Kingdom	68.9
Latvia	4.1	Hungary	2.4	United Kingdom	22.2	Italy	1.41	Denmark	49.0	Lithuania	27	Latvia	39	Estonia	66.8
Belgium	3.9	Sweden	2.4	Norway	22.7	Slovakia	1.40	Belgium	50.0	Latvia	28	Sweden	39	Belgium	65.0
France	3.9	Portugal	2.5	Estonia	23.5	Liechtenstein	1.40	Sweden	54.3	Romania	29	Lithuania	48	Latvia	64.9
Estonia	3.8	Finland	2.5	Finland	28.3	Germany	1.39	Norway	55.0	Bulgaria	:	Iceland	:		
Portugal	3.8	Switzerland	2.5	Denmark	28.6	Spain	1.38	France	55.8	Cyprus	:	Liechtenstein	:		
Spain	3.6	Denmark	2.7	Sweden	:	Malta	1.38	Bulgaria	56.1	Malta	:	Norway	:		
Italy	3.6	Liechtenstein	2.7	Iceland	:	Poland	1.38	Slovenia	56.8	Liechtenstein	:	Switzerland	:		
Hungary	3.6	Czech Republic	2.8	Montenegro	:	Portugal	1.36	Estonia	59.7	Montenegro	:	Montenegro	:		
Luxembourg	3.5	Lithuania	2.8	Croatia	:	Romania	1.33	Iceland	65.0	Croatia	:	Croatia	:		
Bulgaria	3.2	Belgium	3.0	FYRO Macedonia	:	Hungary	1.25	Montenegro	:	FYRO Macedonia	:	FYRO Macedonia	:		
Slovenia	3.2	Malta	:	Liechtenstein	:	Latvia	1.17	Turkey	:	Turkey	:	Turkey	:		