

SPECIFIC PRECONDITIONS OF FAMILY CHANGES IN THE NEW MARKET ECONOMY COUNTRIES

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Note: *In the presentation are supplied data for the DIALOG project participant countries only: CEE countries - Czech Republic (CR), Estonia (EST), Germany former GDR (DE), Hungary (H), Lithuania (LIT), Poland (PL), Romania (R), Slovenia (SLO), and for the context - Austria (A), Belgium (B), Finland (FIN), Germany (D) Italy (I), Netherlands (NL). "DIALOG – Population Policy Acceptance Study (PPAS): The Viewpoint of Citizens and Policy Actors Regarding The Management of Population Related Change" funded by the European Commission under the 5th Framework Programme, Contract No. HPSE-CT-2002-00153*

FAMILY TRANSFORMATION: SYMPTOMS, TRENDS AND CURRENT SITUATION

Symptoms. Since the beginning of the 1990s, in the new market economy countries, i.e. countries of Central and Eastern Europe, rapid family transformation started:

- ✓ decrease of marriage rates
- ✓ postponement and “ageing” of marriage
- ✓ spread of cohabitation
- ✓ transition to very low fertility
- ✓ postponement and “ageing” of fertility
- ✓ increase of extra marital births, etc.

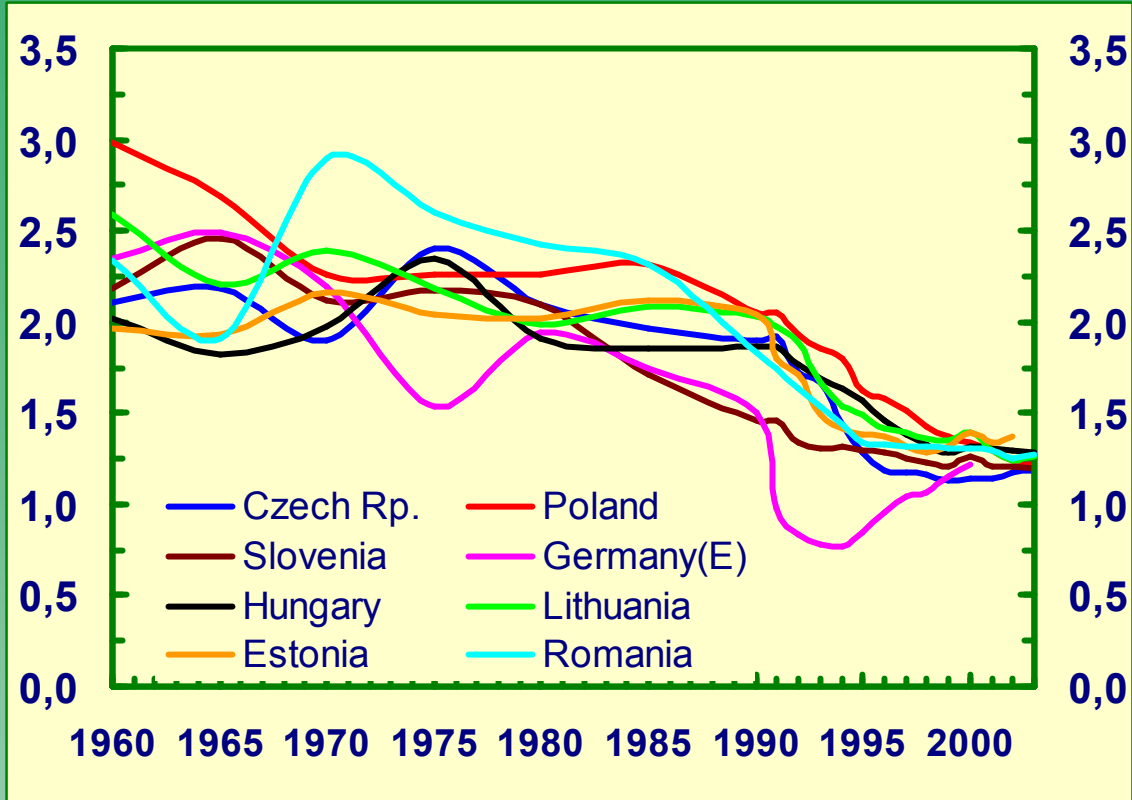
It seems that the family transformation, which had started in the North and West European countries about four decades ago, followed by the South European countries some time later, has, since the 1990s, turned towards the Central and Eastern Europe.

Although rapid family changes in the countries started since the 1990s, nevertheless:

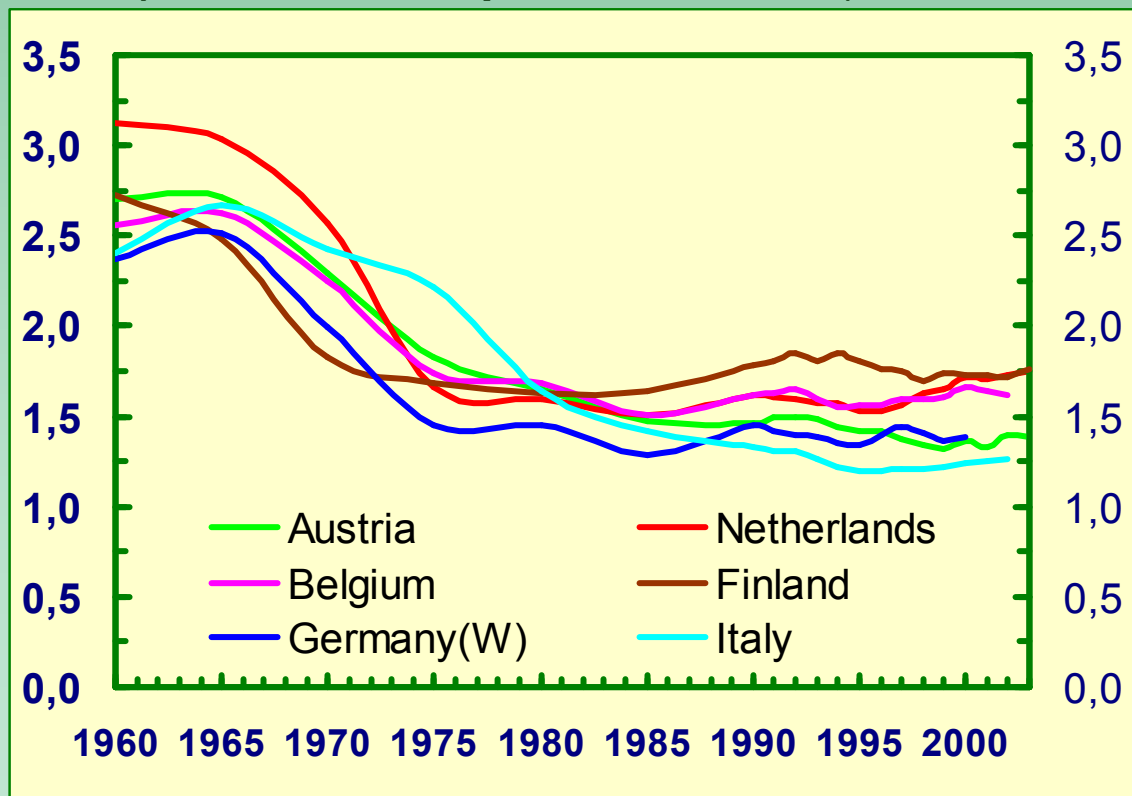
- ✓ actual family changes in certain countries started at different times
- ✓ the changes have been occurring at different speed
- ✓ the changes are different in scope
- ✓ processes related to partnership formation and to childbearing have been progressing in a different way

FIG. 1. Total fertility rate

a) Central and Eastern European countries (DIALOG countries)



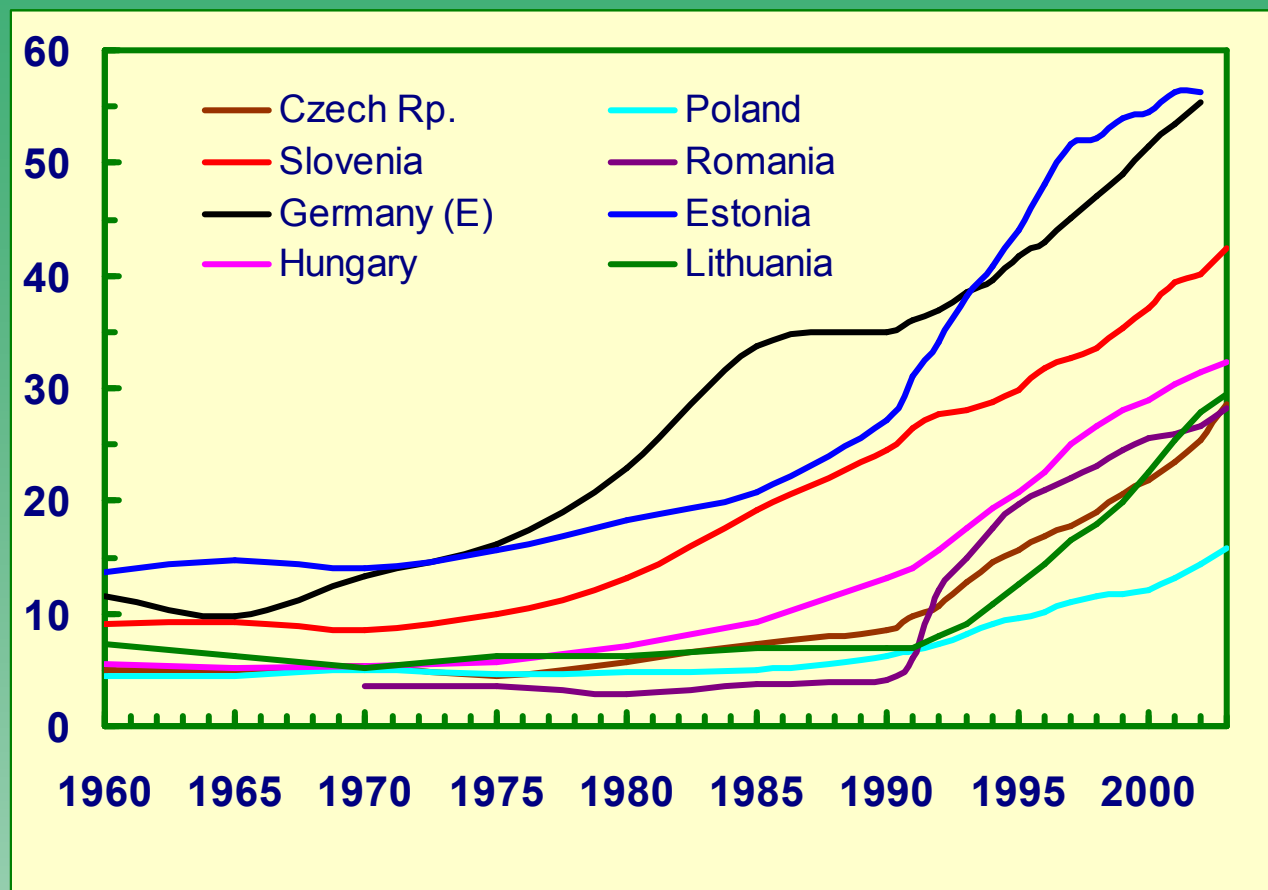
b) Western European countries (DIALOG countries)



Sources: *Recent demographic developments in Europe*. Council of Europe Publishing (publications of different years)

FIG. 2. Extra-marital rate (percent)

DIALOG project countries



Sources: *Recent demographic developments in Europe*. Council of Europe Publishing (publications of different years)

Trends. In different CEE countries timing and speed of family transformation vary:

- ✓ Family transformation started the earliest in Slovenia and Estonia. Changes of family in Slovenia started in the 1970s and have been progressing slowly (increase of cohabitation, spread of extra marital births and transition to very low fertility). In Estonia, family changes were developing in a controversial way (steady increase of cohabitation started even earlier; extra-marital births rate was around 15% already in the beginning of 1960s; however transition to very low fertility started in the 1990s)
- ✓ Somewhat later (in the 1980s) family changes started in Czech Rp., Hungary.

- ✓ In East Germany family changes started also early, for which a fluctuating shape was typical.
- ✓ The latest start of family transformation was observed in Lithuania and Poland (since the 1990s), but the changes were very rapid (Fig. 1; Fig. 2).
- ✓ In CEE countries, fertility decline trends are inconsistent and significantly different from the Western countries (Fig. 1 a, b)

Current situation

Situation in **partnership formation** varies in different CEE countries:

- ✓ Spread of cohabitation is different (most frequent in Estonia and Slovenia, least – in Poland and Lithuania)
- ✓ The rate of extra-marital births is highly varied, too (in 2002-2003 the highest was in Estonia (56%), Slovenia (42,5%); moderate - in Hungary (32%), Lithuania (30%), Czech Rp. (28,5%); low - in Poland (16%).
- ✓ Level of marriage “ageing” has progressed unevenly, too (in 2002 mean age of first marriage of female was highest in Slovenia (27,4), lowest - in Lithuania (24,3).

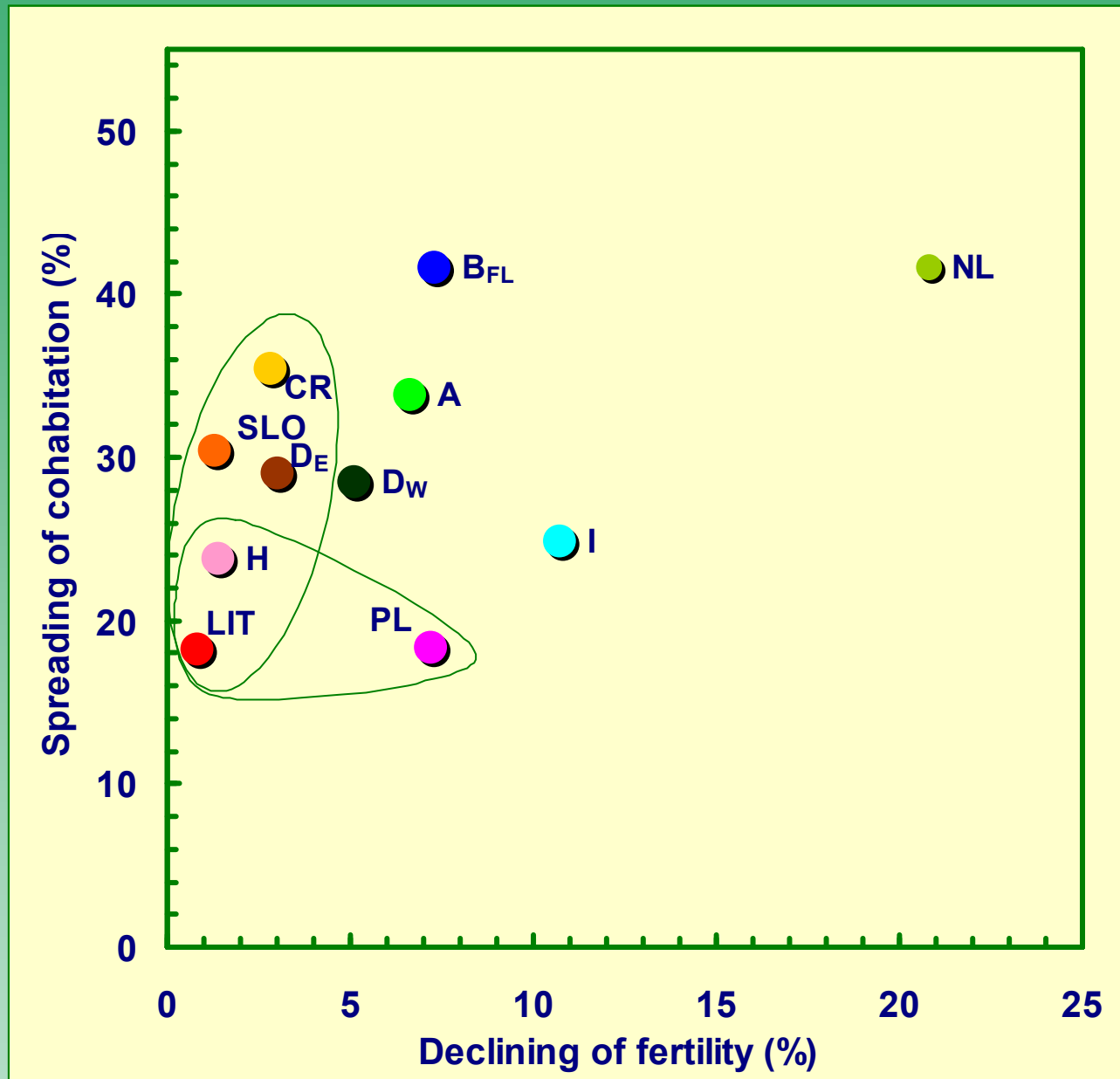
Situation in **childbearing** is rather similar in all CEE countries: fertility is on the lowest low level (TFR around 1,3):

- ✓ In 2002 TFR was the lowest in Czech Rp. (1,17); highest – in Estonia (1,37)
- ✓ Fertility “ageing” is most advanced in Slovenia (mean age of first birth – 27,2), the least – in Lithuania (24,3).

Thus, family transformation is the most advanced in Slovenia (close to western type), the least – in Lithuania and Poland.

FIG. 3. Assessments of family changes

Assessment of changes in family formation pattern and decline of fertility (20-49, estimation: “good” or “very good”)



Source: Project DIALOG. PPAS data

FAMILY CHANGES: ASSESSMENTS

By the way the society accepts/rejects the phenomena of family transformation, a certain assessment of the advance of the processes in the country and of its likely development can be made.

Partnership formation. In the countries where the spread of the new family formation pattern (cohabitation) started later, this phenomenon has drawn a much lower public acceptance level (Poland, Lithuania) than in the countries, where cohabitation started earlier (Czech Rp., Slovenia, East Germany), with exception of Hungary noted for familist orientations (Fig. 3). The fact that in each subsequently younger generation opinions on cohabitation have been liberalising (increase of positive and decrease of negative opinions) is indicative of a further propagation of the phenomenon. Nevertheless, with the diminishing differences in the opinions of the youngest generations the differences between the countries are still significant: highly conservative opinions persist in Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, and the most liberal – in Slovenia, and Czech Rp. In the latter countries, the opinions on cohabitation of the youngest generations are actually identical to those of west European countries. In different countries, opinions on cohabitation have been influenced by Catholicism (Poland), secularisation level (Czech Rp.), prevalence of familist orientations (Hungary).

Childbearing. Overall, the majority of the countries participating in the project are anxious about decreasing childbearing (responses to the effect that it is “bad” or “very bad” are predominant), particularly CEE countries, where a decline in fertility was sudden and dropped to the lowest values (here negative opinions around 90%). Among CEE countries, Poland is an exceptional country, in which less concern was voiced about decreasing fertility (Fig. 3). This might as well account for a syndrome of a large nation.

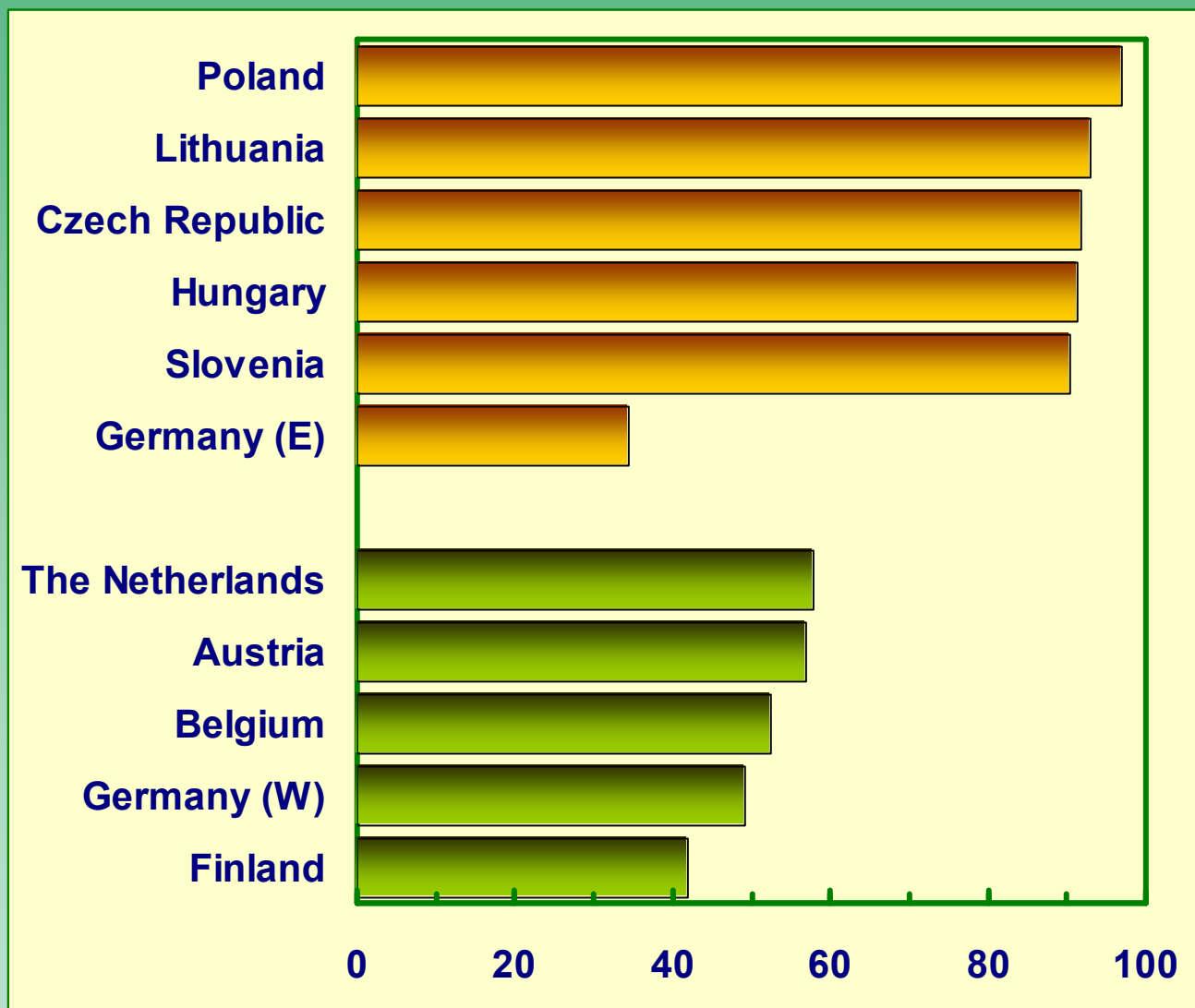
FACTORS OF FAMILY INSTITUTION CHANGES AND FERTILITY DECLINE

In the 1990s, diverse factors have affected rapid family institution changes and decreasing fertility in new market economy countries:

- ❑ **Economic factors** (economic transformations, economic crises)
unemployment, low income, poverty, etc.
- ❑ **Transformation effect factors**
anomy, deprivation, etc.
- ❑ **Inherited factors**
lack of dwelling, orientation towards paternalistic government policy, conflict between patriarchal attitudes and emancipation, specifics of female employment
- ❑ **Demographic factors**
emigration of youth, family transformation etc.
- ❑ **Cultural factors (SDT)**
individualisation, emancipation, freedom of choice, secularisation, modern contraception, etc.

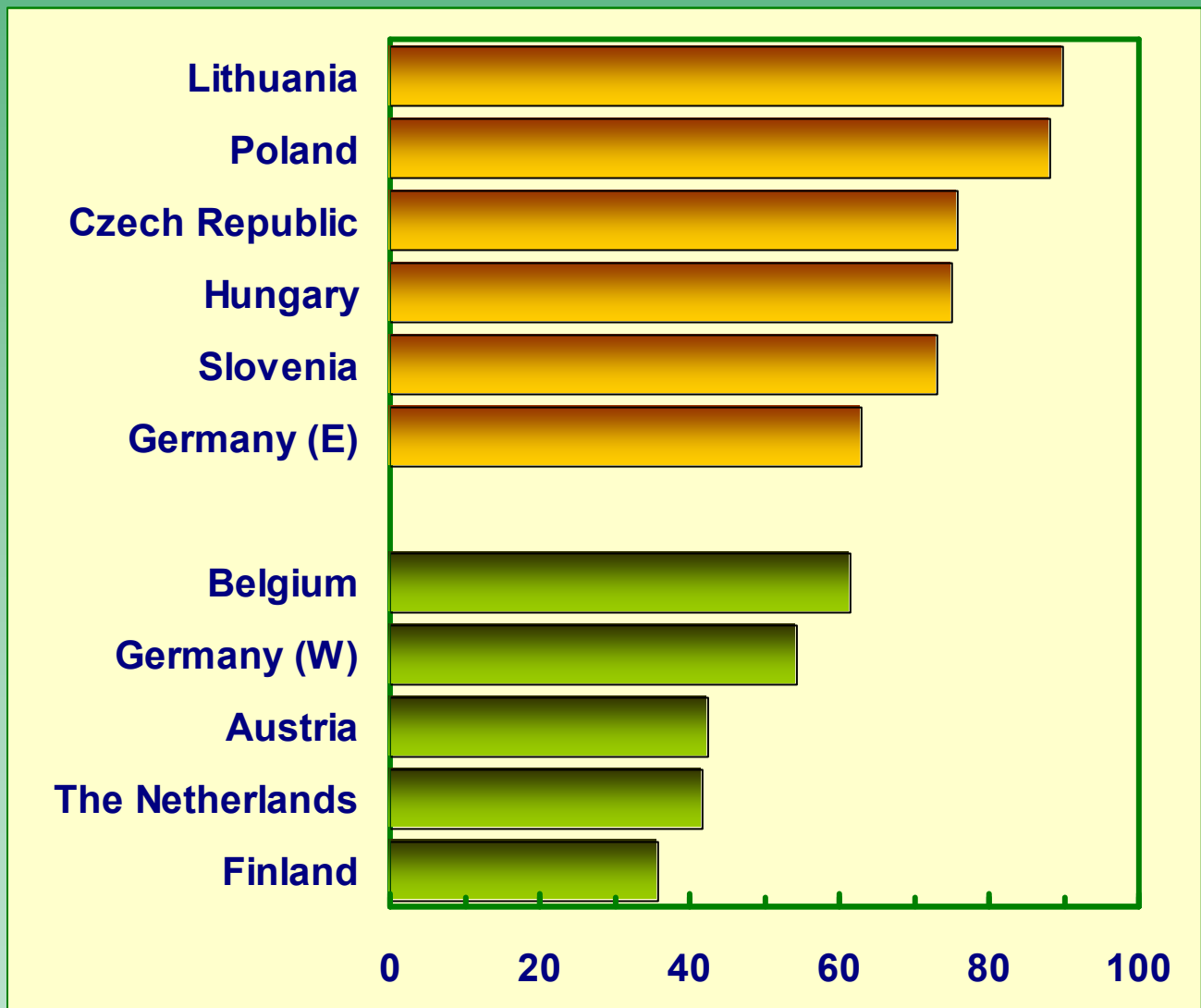
ASSESSMENTS OF CAUSES IN THE POSTPONEMENT OR RENOUNCEMENT OF MARRIAGES

FIG. 4. Difficulties in acquiring a dwelling
("very important" or "important"), percent



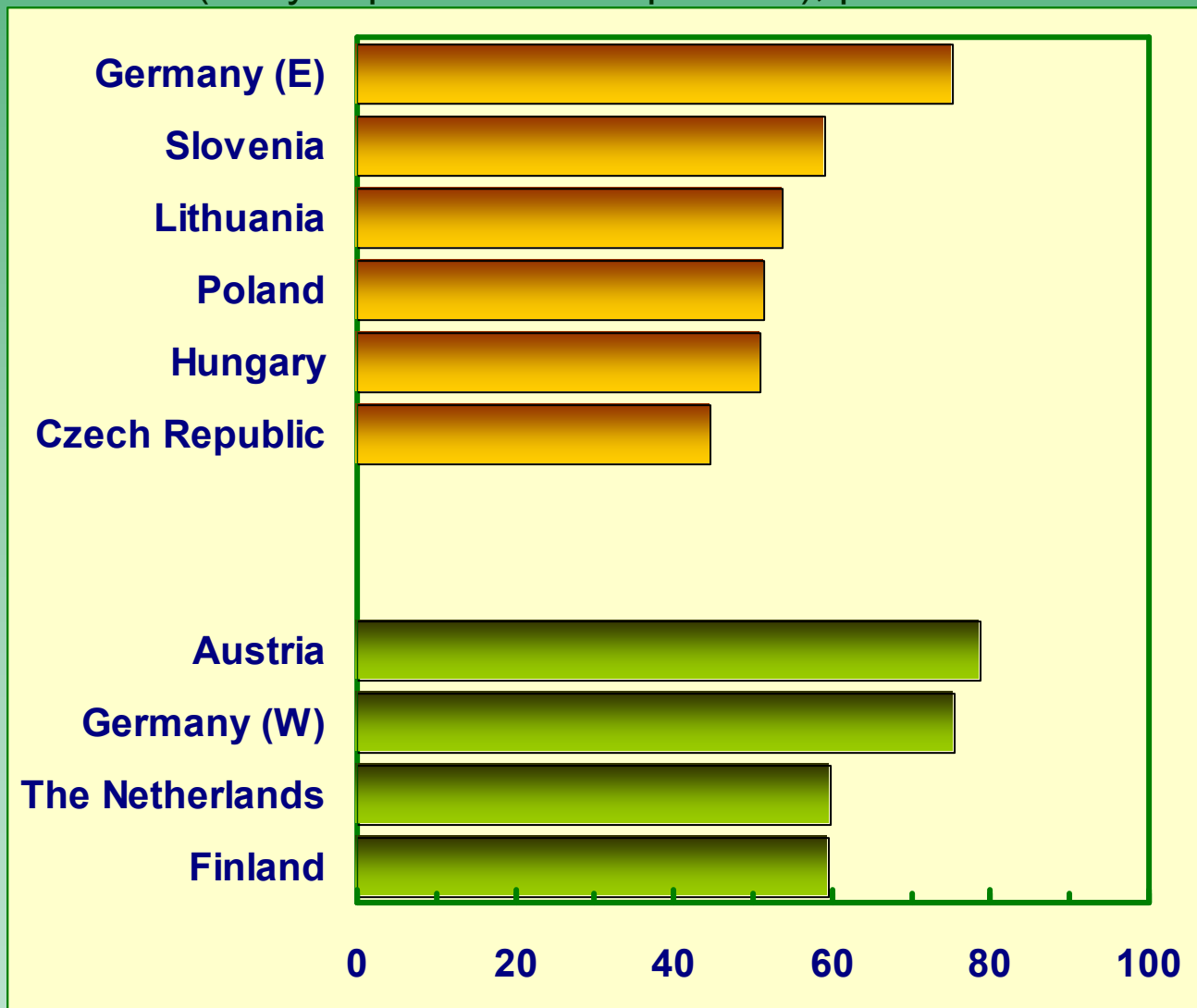
Source: Project DIALOG. PPAS data

FIG. 5. Insufficient income for getting married
("very important" or "important") percent



Source: Project DIALOG. PPAS data

FIG. 6. Increasing desire for independence and autonomy among young people
("very important" or "important"), percent



Source: Project DIALOG. PPAS data

The importance of economic factors for family changes in CEE countries have been also confirmed by the results of the PPAS survey (Fig. 4, Fig. 5).

In nearly all the participant CEE countries an absolute majority of respondents agree that marriage is postponed because of:

- ❑ Difficulty in acquiring a dwelling (about 90% in each country)
- ❑ Inadequate income (73-90%)
- ❑ Situation of the youth on the labour market (difficulties to find job - 76-90%).

In CEE countries, economic causes in postponement or renouncement of marriage are much more frequently considered as important in comparison with social, cultural or demographic causes:

- ✓ Among these the **difficulties in acquiring a dwelling** is the most important. In CEE countries it is an evidently inherited problem, besides the problem is further aggravated by the zooming prices for a dwelling unit during the transformational period. Differences in the assessment of this cause between CEE and Western countries are truly large. (Fig. 4).
- ✓ Although the majority of respondents in CEE countries indicate that **insufficient income** is important for the postponement or renouncement of marriage (“important” or “very important”), this is not a specifically CEE country cause (it is also mentioned by nearly a half of the respondents in the Western countries) (Fig. 5). (Lithuania and Poland make a certain exception here: this particular difficulty has been mentioned by almost 90% respondents).

- ✓ **Instability on the labour market** has even a greater effect on the decreasing marriage rate: difficulties of this type are common for all the countries of market economy; only in CEE countries they are slightly larger. In the new market economy countries the problem is also new, thus it bears some features of deprivation. Furthermore, it is more complicated due to the inherited orientations towards paternalistic state policy in the field.

Economic difficulties in CEE countries are also stressed when causes for unwillingness to have children are considered. However, unwillingness to have children is mostly motivated (in Lithuania – nearly 90%) by the anxiety for the children's future, which serves as an umbrella for causes of different origins.

In comparison with economic factors, cultural (changing values) factors are less frequently considered as important. Besides, the evaluations of the causes in western and CEE countries are quite similar (Fig. 6). Thus economic difficulties in CEE countries become kind of extra factors predetermining rapid family changes and a very steep and marked decline of fertility.

CONCLUSIONS

Rapid family changes have been taking place in all CEE countries since the early 1990s. However, in some countries changes were just intensified (Slovenia, Czech Rp., Hungary), while in others – triggered off (Lithuania, Poland). Differences in the onset of the changes have predetermined a rather diversified current situation and the achieved level of changes. In some countries, the advance of the processes has been faster, while

in others – slower: in Slovenia, Czech Rp. and Estonia – the most, and in Poland and Lithuania – the least. However, the changes in partnership formation pattern and in fertility pattern are not evolving along the same lines. In new market economy countries, the greatest differences of the family changes are seen in the changes of partnership formation patterns, whereas changes in childbearing and transition to the lowest low fertility are actually alike in all the countries.

In different countries differences at the beginning of family transformation have been predetermined by a variety of preconditions. In the countries where family changes started earlier, the preconditions were more “western” in character and could be attributed to the factors of second demographic transition. However they were weaker than in the western countries and did not manifest themselves in full scope. And still, rapid family changes of the 1990s in all CEE countries were predetermined by fundamental economic-social transformations, which in the initial stage were accompanied by an economic decline and lowered living standards. Thus during this period the economic factors gave a push to the rapid family transformation (of the beginning of the 1990s): speedy decline of marriage and fertility, postponement of marriage and childbearing. But alongside the rapidly changing socio-economic environment and transition to market economy and democratic liberal society, the “classical” factors of the second demographic transition were gaining strength too, which predetermined the essential changes of the family institution. Still, economic factors (brought about by transformation or inherited) retain their importance in all CEE countries. Thus, regardless of the “westernising” family transformation situation, both by its quantitative parameters and factors, the economic factors still hold considerable strength and frequently might even overshadow the fundamental ones.