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Romania: Childbearing metamorphosis within a changing context

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Abstract

In 1989, the socialist regime in Romania collapsed and the state's coercive pro-natalist policy ended. Since then, fertility has gone through major changes, namely, a massive reduction in fertility and important structural changes: birth postponement, an end to universal childbearing, and the emergence of non-marital births. Family formation has been postponed, but a pattern of early marriage still persists compared to other European countries. Although unmarried cohabitation is rising, it is rarely seen as an alternative to marriage. Modern contraceptive methods are being used increasingly, but traditional contraceptive methods continue to be widespread. Abortion, which was re-legalized in 1989 and made available after two decades of prohibition, has been practiced extensively ever since, especially after first birth. Romanians in 2004 continue to have a universal preference for parenting. However, the preference for the two-child family has declined and the desire for a larger family has become the exception. The transformation of the socialist regime into a democratic society with a market economy generated a socio-economic crisis, and the majority of social benefits have therefore been oriented towards alleviating poverty. Other social policies, including those affecting the family, were redefined. However, fewer funds were made available than for those geared to promote economic development or reduce poverty and, as a consequence, their impact on childbearing has been small.

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