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## Overview Chapter 8: The impact of public policies on European fertility

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### Abstract

This chapter outlines the positions in the current debate about the possibility of using public policies to influence fertility. We note the polarization between, on the one hand, those who view public policies as obvious means for lifting the currently low fertility levels in Europe, in line with the role of economic policies in a modern society; and, on the other hand, those who feel that family policies are inefficient, and perhaps even unnecessary. We place the contributions of the national chapters of this book in this framework and describe the formidable methodological difficulties that face those who seek to investigate policy impacts on fertility behavior. While properly conducted empirical investigations have overcome such problems and have clearly demonstrated policy effects in specific circumstances, we conclude that, in general, national fertility is possibly best seen as a systemic outcome that depends more on broader attributes, such as the degree of family-friendliness of a society, and less on the presence and detailed construction of monetary benefits.

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
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