

## **Older adults' living arrangements in Europe**

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### **Background**

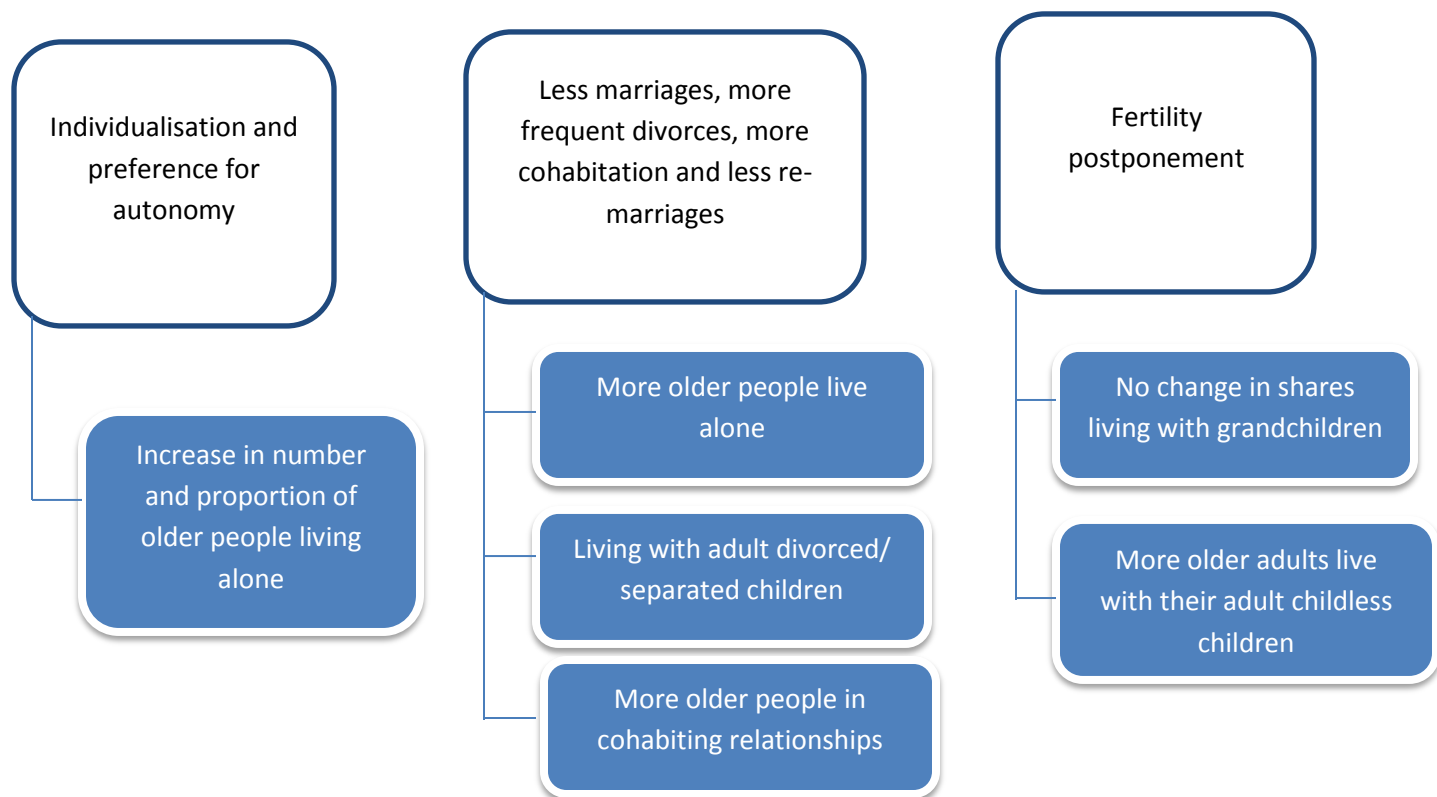
Persistent sub-replacement fertility and high life-expectancy, coupled with modern family dynamics, have rendered Europe a world-leading region with regard to the experience of demographic ageing (Rowland 2012). The availability of kin in older ages has become one of the main focuses in the light of these major demographic shifts (Puur et al. 2011). According to some scholars, living alone might become a more frequent form of living arrangement due to higher shares of cohabitation and higher risk of dissolution of such partnership forms as well as due to higher childlessness (Keilman & Christiansen 2010, Moustgaard & Martikainen 2009). Due to more frequent re-partnering, one of the assumptions has been that new families substitute old family networks and therefore the informal support element for elderly does not disappear, but some evidence shows that there is rather complementing than substitution occurring (Dykstra and Fokkema 2011). Living arrangements are important as they provide the closest social support networks for older people. There is a lack of comparative research of older people's living arrangements' developments over time involving European countries, especially including eastern parts of Europe. Previously, Estonia has not fit into one of the existing living arrangements' country regime typologies (Iacovou & Skew 2011). Also, among the older population Estonia shows one of the highest proportions of people in the EU living alone (Iacovou & Skew 2011), raising questions about the potential social support resources for older people.

The Second Demographic Transition (SDT) framework has been used among demographers to describe major changes in partnership formation and fertility patterns. In terms of partnership formation, the SDT foresees less people marrying, and marrying at later ages than previously. On the other hand, there are more people divorcing and living in non-marital cohabitation. Other partnership forms spread, such as living apart together. Remarriages decrease since marriage as an institution is not the only possible way of partnership anymore. Childbearing stopped being confined to marriage only; also having children was postponed to later ages. Postponement of childbearing has led to long-term sub-replacement fertility, fuelling ageing of populations further. As cohabitation spreads, having children within cohabitations becomes more usual. At the same time, also definitive childlessness within unions increases. (Lesthaeghe & Neels 2002).

These changes have been explained by changes in values and norms, mainly as moving towards preferring individualism, autonomy and self-actualisation, and thus reflecting a general focus on "higher order needs" (Lesthaeghe & Neels 2002). One of the aspects that Lesthaeghe & Neels (2002) bring out is the weakening of social cohesion as a consequence of these changes.

The Second Demographic Transition focuses mostly on processes that are concentrated in younger ages of the life course, whereas ageing is a process partly influenced by SDT factors (e.g. sub-replacement fertility levels). As the proportion of older people grows in societies, however, also heterogeneity among these older adults' living arrangements might appear. This paper aims to map the trends of living

arrangements of older adults over several decades, and link these developments to the Second Demographic Transition framework (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Schematic linkage of the Second Demographic Transition and older adults' living arrangements**

## Data and Methods

Data about the following countries and years were selected from the IPUMS-International database: Austria (1971, 1981, 1991, 2001), France (1968, 1982, 1990, 1999, 2006), Greece (1971, 1981, 1991, 2001), Hungary (1970, 1980, 1990, 2001), Israel (1972, 1983, 1995, 2001), Portugal (1981, 1991, 2001), Spain (1991, 2001), Switzerland (1970, 1980, 1990, 2000). The selection was based on the condition that integrated information from at least two census points per country as well as relevant household composition variables would be available. Additionally, data from the Estonian censuses (1989, 2000, 2011) will be added to place Estonia in a comparative perspective among other European countries. Descriptive data exploration methods will be used to present basic household indicators, such as (mean) household size and numbers and proportions of older people living in different household arrangements.

## Preliminary results

Preliminary descriptive results from the IPUMS database are presented in table 1.

**Table 1. Proportion of 60+ population by household type in four countries**

		1970/71	1980/81	1990/91	2001
Portugal	One-person household	15,26	15,54	16,61	17,74
	Married/cohab couple, no children	35,96	38,06	40,92	43,00
	Married/cohab couple, with children	11,12	12,69	13,25	12,18
	Single-parent family	3,24	3,44	3,77	4,09
	Extended family, relatives only	29,56	25,26	20,45	17,23
	Composite household	2,53	2,10	1,36	0,95
	Non-family household	0,78	0,82	0,69	0,41
	Group quarters	1,22	1,99	2,93	3,36
	Unclassifiable	0,33	0,11	0,03	1,04
Austria	One-person household	24,96	30,43	29,46	28,60
	Married/cohab couple, no children	32,68	33,60	34,96	39,53
	Married/cohab couple, with children	8,57	8,29	9,82	10,08
	Single-parent family	3,23	3,07	3,65	3,35
	Extended family, relatives only	21,49	17,38	16,09	13,79
	Composite household	4,07	2,26	1,68	0,64
	Non-family household	2,03	1,46	1,03	0,70
	Group quarters	2,96	3,46	3,27	3,31
	Unclassifiable	0,00	0,05	0,03	0,01
Hungary	One-person household	11,03	2,02	24,89	27,53
	Married/cohab couple, no children	2,91	35,57	3,74	37,74
	Married/cohab couple, with children	0,71	7,87	7,46	8,28
	Single-parent family	2,63	5,20	5,84	4,94
	Extended family, relatives only	3,79	27,07	2,11	1,72
	Composite household	0,00	1,08	1,05	0,00
	Non-family household	0,00	0,41	0,71	0,00
	Unclassified subfamily	44,95	0,00	0,00	4,08
	Other	0,00	0,00	0,00	13,07
	Group quarters	1,40	2,20	1,36	2,16
Unclassifiable	0,03	0,41	0,14	0,48	
Greece	One-person household	9,08	13,18	14,98	16,18
	Married/cohab couple, no children	24,23	34,23	37,21	37,60
	Married/cohab couple, with children	15,98	13,64	16,03	17,88
	Single-parent family	3,58	3,07	3,21	3,92
	Extended family, relatives only	43,46	34,58	27,83	20,47
	Composite household	0,88	0,56	0,46	3,33
	Non-family household	0,16	0,35	0,25	0,59
	Unclassifiable	2,63	0,39	0,03	0,01

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