

# Family Policy in the Context of the Transition to Sustainable Development: A Comparative Analysis of Russia and Kazakhstan

Zhuldyzay Iskakova\* and Nataliya Kalashnikova

*L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, 010000 Satpayev Str., 2, Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan*

**Abstract:** Despite the crisis of values that is characteristic of many countries in the world, family remains the focus of the state policy for most of them. It is recognized as the basic social unit of society, whose level of development inevitably affects the progress of the entire society. In this sense, families are active agents for achieving sustainable development goals. Thus, the progress of families will inevitably affect the progress of their communities and societies. This research paper considers a wide range of issues relating to family policy in Central Asian countries, with particular emphasis on the national policy in the field of family relations in Kazakhstan and Russia. The authors consider the concept of family policy and its impact on the family institution, study the role and importance of such a policy in the modern context, as well as analyze the conditions for the formation of the family policy during the USSR period and after the independence of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan.

**Keywords:** Family policy, Family institution, Marriage, Civil society institutions.

## INTRODUCTION

### The Crisis of Family Transformation in the 21st Century and the Formation of Modern Family Policies

Currently, throughout the world, the family institution is going through a period of active transformations. Even though the family continues to be the most important value in almost all countries of the world, according to the World Value Surveys website, the perception of the role of women and men in families has changed significantly over the past few decades. These roles have undergone various demographic, socio-economic, and cultural changes that affect the formation, stability, and overall well-being of families.

In developed countries of the world, the prerequisites of the crisis were outlined back in the 1970s. They include an increase in the divorce rate, an increase in the number of single-parent families, as well as a decline in the birth rate that does not ensure the proper "reproduction" of the population (Yanovsky 2007). Consequently, representatives of social sciences and humanities have been engaged in active discussions for decades about what constitutes a family, what should be the basis for management in this area and how it should be implemented.

The definitions adopted in the 1960-70s, both in the West and in the countries of the former USSR, were almost identical, but at the same time very general. The concept of the family included the cohabitation and

housekeeping of adults of different genders, being in socially recognized sexual relations that lead to the birth of children (Vershinina 2017). At the same time, the concept of family was long based on the "economic agreement" (Vershinina 2017), but later the idea of romantic love formed the basis of marriage, which radically changed its very essence, leaving only the same name.

Western researchers concluded that such criteria as official marriage registration, cohabitation, and housekeeping have lost their relevance for distinguishing married couples. Only the sexual basis and the degree of emotional intimacy in a couple are significant. There has been a serious change in value orientations: "Marriage and family, requiring tremendous emotional work and mutual patience, are replaced by the ideals of free love, whose sphere of interests does not include raising children and forming a strong family. In culture, the ideals of an independent person free of obligations to their lineage and family begin to dominate, and the values of confronting generations are being formed" (Novosyelova 2014).

Currently, there are no clear and universal definitions of family and marriage. Perhaps this circumstance is also connected with the fact that the Oxford Dictionary of Sociology does not offer a specific definition of family; it just contains such articles as "extended family", "nuclear family", "sociology of family" (Scott & Marshall 2009). All this is probably the reason for the relative lack of attention to the sphere of family relations, both on the part of the authorities and of scholars.

The traditional paradigm, which dominated after World War II, is replaced by an innovative, personality-

\*Address correspondence to this author at the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, 010000 Satpayev Str., 2, Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan; Tel: +77022599994; E-mail: zhuldyzay89@gmail.com

oriented, decentralized one, aimed at self-development and personal autonomy in the choice of behavior strategy (Rukavishnikov, Khalman & Ester 1998). Certainly, it would be extremely unreasonable to narrow down this change to value-normative arbitrariness and anomie. It is about replacing the rigidly regulating role of tradition, external authority, and institution with responsibility and the possibilities of the rationality of an individual in defining the goals and ideals of their life. The variability and pluralism of family types reflect the ubiquitous process of erosion of the standard system of family-marriage behavioral norms and the content of family roles. At the same time, an individual learns to choose the frame of being, developed by culture, to separate the valuable, developed, and tested by culture, from the imitation, the counterfeit, which ultimately turns out to be destructive (Fedotova 2003).

In this paper, we adhere to the following statement, which, in our opinion, meets today's requirements: "...a family is considered to be any unit that defines itself as a family including individuals who are related by blood or marriage as well as those who have committed to share their lives" (Hanson & Lynch 1998).

Despite all the changes that have affected the family institution, states retain their interest in the family as a social unit that influences the formation and strengthening of social relations. Family policy is the basis of national public policy and the most significant means of the state to influence the standard of living of future generations. In particular, states are interested in the reproduction of the population, in improving the health of the population and the quality of labor resources, and in the effective socialization of children, which allows creating the foundation for its economic, political, military security, and further evolutionary, sustainable development. All these steps and measures are realized through the conduct of a focused family policy.

The family, being a peculiar micro-social community and a social institution at the same time, forms the "supporting structure" of society and the state. Therefore, the latter is most interested in the protection and development of families primarily for the sake of its functioning. There are also other reasons to focus on the role of the family and family policy in promoting sustainable development. According to the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), sustainable development, in turn, is defined as "development that meets the needs of the present

without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". In other words, this term implies the society's ability to meet its needs and achieve economic growth while simultaneously protecting the well-being of communities and the environment to ensure that future generations enjoy the same socio-economic and environmental conditions.

Sustainable development combines three pillars that represent economic, social, and environmental integrity, which together form a balance. However, the socio-economic and environmental conditions of the modern world are far from sustainable. States were primarily concerned with economic growth, neglecting the other two pillars. In response, the United Nations launched the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a universal call to action, which was adopted at the 2015 UN Summit. This document, containing 17 goals and 169 targets, was approved by more than 150 world leaders, including heads of state and government, calling it a plan of action for the sustainable development of the entire human community until 2030. All 17 goals are interrelated, and at least 8 of them are indirectly aimed at activating family programs. No poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, gender equality, peace, justice, and strong institutions—these goals concern families, make society sustainable, preventing depression, suicides, and anti-social behavior. It is healthy families that have more opportunities for raising healthy children and making them successful citizens, in the socio-economic and morally sustainable understanding.

It should be noted that all the described trends are relevant for various countries of the world, including the Central Asian region. They directly influence the formation of state policy in the social sphere, and in family policy, in particular.

As for studies on the family policy in Central Asian countries, they are not numerous, with most of them concerning only individual countries (Russia, in particular). Among these studies, one can note the works of A. Noskova (2013), V. Borisenkov and O. Gukalenko (2014), T. Rezvushkina (2015), O. Shusharina (2016), T. Pavlycheva (2016), O. Kuchmayeva (2017). Regarding extensive comparative studies across several countries or the region as a whole, such studies are not yet available.

In this study, the authors aim to analyze the concept of family policy and its impact on the family institution in the context of sustainable development, to study the

role and importance of such a policy in modern conditions, as well as to analyze the conditions for the formation of the family policy during the USSR period and after the independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Russian Federation. The authors also describe the capabilities of civil society institutions that influence the development of family policy.

Achieving these tasks is impossible without using a set of complementary theoretical research methods. The system approach and the theory of international relations, which applied the method of summary data and the problem-logical method of data analysis, play the most important role in the construction of the research methodology. The authors analyzed a vast number of sources on the given topic and studied several orders, state programs, and decrees of Russia and Kazakhstan. By comparing these data, conclusions and forecasts were made regarding the conduct of the family policy in the aforementioned countries.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Family Policy as a Tool of State Influence and its Significance

Family policy (in its modern sense) is believed to have originated in France in the early 20th century. The prerequisites for its creation were a series of measures taken by the French government to increase the country's population to have an army outnumbering "the army of the most likely adversary" (Isupova 2017).

Family policy is one of the key areas of social policy in most states of the modern world. It is a complex system of state activity, which is oriented towards the family as a social institution. Its focus is on strengthening, comprehensive development, sovereignty, and protection of the rights and interests of the family, which are based on legal relations with the state (Sidorov 2015). One can also add that the purpose of family policy is to advocate the specific interests of the family as one of the many institutions that interact with each other and the specific interests of the individual as a carrier of family roles performed along with other social roles (Vishnevskiy 1992).

Following the basic functions of the family and the spheres of its activity, the following areas of state family policy are distinguished: development of the legislative framework; demographic policy; state economic policy concerning families; sociocultural policy; development of social services for families; state support for families in special circumstances; regional

family policy; interaction of the state and non-governmental organizations – subjects of family policy; development of mechanisms for the implementation of social policy about families in the medium term (Kolomoitsev 2015).

The family policy can be considered in broad and narrow senses. Narrowly speaking, the family policy can be regarded as assistance and services provided exclusively to married couples or single parents. Such assistance may include financial support (benefits upon the birth of children, assistance to multi-child families), indirect state support (for example, tax breaks), maternity leave, and leave for childcare, as well as a system of childcare facilities, etc. In a broad sense, the family policy includes all areas of state policy that in one way or another relate to the well-being of the family. This, in particular, may include a policy in the field of assistance to families with retirees, employment policy, family law, social services, health care, educational activities, etc. Thus, everything that the government does, influencing the family, can potentially relate to the sphere of family policy (Kolomoitsev 2015).

The importance of conducting a coordinated family policy in the state is difficult to overestimate. If we turn to the UN's SDGs, we can see that most of them directly or indirectly related to family policy. For example, such goals as no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, and gender equality can be achieved only through the strengthened work of the state in the implementation of family policy. In this case, an important condition for the effectiveness of family policy is a differentiated approach, taking into account the peculiarities of the country's socio-economic development, the historical stage of the transformation of the family institution, the patterns, and structures of families, their income, needs, and interests. The tasks of stabilization and development of the family institution determine the need for a system approach to the analysis of the processes in this field, the identification of specific sustainable features of the family, its development patterns, as well as the evaluation of the most painful processes.

For example, regarding the problem of poverty and hunger, in Russia, there are almost 20 million people (about 13% of the population), whose income is below the subsistence level (Almazova 2019). Data also show that 80% of families below the poverty line are families with children. At the same time, according to unofficial

data, these figures can be much higher. Currently, the country's authorities are stimulating the birth of children, but social support for families with children is uneven in age. It is provided to the family until the child reaches one and a half years of age, but then the family income drops sharply. Families with children are the largest poverty group in Russia. They make up more than half of the total number of families whose incomes are below the subsistence level (Faliakhov 2018).

As for Kazakhstan, the share of the country's residents with incomes below the subsistence level was 2.6% in 2018. According to UNICEF, more than 90% of poor families in the country are multi-child families, and children make up more than 40% of all Kazakhstanis living below the poverty line.

Considering the problem of gender inequality in these countries, one can say that in Kazakhstan there is a significant gender wage gap. The average wage gap between men and women is 33%, which is higher than in the US and the UK, where the gap is about 28% and 18%, respectively. According to the World Economic Forum, Kazakhstan ranked 60th in the gender gap index in 2018, moving down by 28 positions (compared with 2013).

As for Russia, the difference in hourly wages between men and women is on average 22.9%, according to 2018 data. According to the World Bank study "Women, Business and the Law 2019", Russian women have problems with starting a job, getting paid, and running a business. Also, they are not protected from domestic violence.

Undoubtedly, the presence of such problems is directly related to the problems of the modern family institution. States should take into account similar problems when building family policy.

Therefore, it can be summarized that the conceptual apparatus of modern family policy is in the process of active transformation, focusing on the internal policy of the state and the current socio-economic and socio-political processes in different countries of the world.

### **Family Policy formation in Central Asia and Russia in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Period**

One of the common elements for Central Asian countries and Russia is the fact that they were part of the Soviet Union (1922-1991). Policy formation, concerning the family, took place in the "center" and

extended to all the republics. Therefore, we can speak of a largely unified approach of the governments of these countries to the issue of family policy.

To analyze the modern family policy of Central Asia countries and Russia, one should consider the historical prerequisites for its formation. As mentioned above, the family policy of the Soviet Union was unified for all countries. There are several main stages of its formation:

- 1) The 1920s and 1930s were marked by fundamental transformations of society. In 1917, men and women became equal in rights, and in 1920, abortions were legalized in Russia. Divorces reached maximum liberalization, the rights of children born out of wedlock, and children whose parents officially registered their relations were equalized, and the very registration of family relations became optional. At that time, the Soviet state assumed the role of "the main and best parent".
- 2) The period between the 1930s and 1950s was characterized by a traditionalist "backslide". The reproductive rights of women began to decline, primarily due to the ban on abortions. The traditional (officially registered) family with children came to the fore. Maternity was regarded as a civil obligation of a woman, her duty to the homeland, rather than a personal desire. The divorce procedure became more stringent and multi-stage – the goal of Soviet society was to fully prevent the destruction of "social units".
- 3) From the 1950s to the collapse of the USSR, family law became much more humanist. The divorce procedure was simplified, a package of benefits provided by the state to families with children was formed, and maternity and childcare leave were prolonged (Elizarov 1994).

Since the early 1990s, each country of the region, along with its independence, has acquired the right to form its family policy. It should be noted that the post-perestroika period until the early 2000s in the former socialist countries was rather difficult because they needed to immediately organize their state policies in various fields and be "embedded" as actors in international relations in the global political arena. Undoubtedly, this situation influenced the approach to the social policy of these countries. In the early years of

independence, it was still partially based on Soviet principles and was inertial (and often formal) in nature. Only starting from the 2000s, the situation in the post-Soviet countries began to line up, and the states began to work on the formation of a country-specific and individualized approach to family policy.

The world economic crisis of 2008-2009 significantly influenced the processes of family policy formation in the context of further modernization of social policy. At the same time, it should be added that the process of modern family policy formation in Central Asian countries and Russia takes place a concerning both global and domestic trends, and the traditional mentality of the peoples inhabiting this region.

In terms of the general trends that are characteristic of the countries of this region, one can highlight the growing interest of the state in the family institution, which is contributed by both political decisions and the intensification of work to promote family values (Zhanuzakov 2017).

Next, we would like to consider in more detail the development of family policy in the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan as the two largest states of Central Asia, which have similarities and differences in the formation of modern trends in family policy.

### **Modern Family Policy in the Russian Federation**

The state family policy of independent Russia, like that of other countries of the former post-Soviet space, was based on the "fragments" of the Soviet system of social protection of the family. The period from the early 1990s to the early 2000s was marked by three fundamental events in the field of family policy:

- 1) Adoption of the family code of the Russian Federation (1995);
- 2) Approval of a new system of benefits for families with children (1995);
- 3) The transition from the universal to the targeted system of child benefits (1999) (Noskova 2013).

At that time, the main activity of the state in the family sphere was the fight against family poverty, and "the social protection of low-income and large families" (Elizarov 1994). At the same time, the main task of the family policy was to eliminate the negative consequences that appeared in various areas after the collapse of the Soviet Union and affected the family.

State support was more declarative, so families could largely rely on themselves (Shusharina 2016).

There has been a steady decline in poverty in many countries in transition since 2000. In Russia, this period is characterized by the transition of the course of social policy to the family sphere. Beginning with the Address of the President to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation in 2006, the demographic theme has become particularly relevant in the discourse of the country's political leaders. Fertility support has come to the forefront of family policy. Of all the measures taken to raise the birth rate, the most controversial was maternal (family) capital (2007), the main purpose of which was to stimulate the birth of the second and subsequent children (Noskova 2013). Thus, starting in 2007, state policy in the family sphere can be considered as pronatalist, aimed at solving demographic problems (Pavlycheva 2016).

Modern Russian families are characterized by the following features and patterns:

- 1) The social family institution is experiencing a deep and sustained crisis, which is characteristic of both developed countries and countries that have taken the path of socio-economic reforms in the past two decades, including Russia.
- 2) As a result of a transformation of the Russian family institution, the essence of the family, its purpose, the role of the family in the lives of individuals, society and the state have changed under the influence of an integrated set of historical, cultural, socio-political, economic, ideological and other factors.
- 3) The process of transformation of the family institution is due to the following factors: the post-perestroika processes of transformation of Russian society; European trends of the transformation of the family institution, including the process of globalization.
- 4) In Russia, the transition from the Soviet type of family to the modern type of family has taken place, which is focused primarily on self-realization and new opportunities for the self-expression of individuals.
- 5) In the process of transformation of the Russian family institution, the fundamentals of its functioning and family interaction, value orientations, and life priorities have changed.

- 6) In modern Russian society, there is an autonomy of all marriage and family institutions. The marriage institution is being transformed into trial marriage, open marriage, and visiting marriage.
- 7) The family institution is being transformed into a family in which there is no married couple.
- 8) The parenthood institution is changing in such a way that it does not have a relationship between a man and a woman as spouses, but there is a relationship between them as between a father and a mother of a common child; or relationships are limited only to the connection between a mother and a child – single motherhood, incomplete family (Borisenkov & Gukalenko 2014).

The Russian Federation is currently searching for an adequate family policy, as previously adopted concepts and programs no longer meet the current needs of society and the family due to the trends described above (Borisenkov & Gukalenko 2014). The problems of the family and family policy were designated among the main points of the 2019 Address of the President of Russia to the Federal Assembly.

The changed socio-political and economic conditions in Russia and the understanding of the importance of the role of the family institution in society necessitated the formation of a new family policy strategy that takes into account the particularities of the modern family institution and relies on an effective mechanism of implementation. The concept of the family policy adopted in 2014 is largely interrelated in terms of objectives, areas and expected results with the Concept of the Demographic Policy of the Russian Federation until 2025, the Russian National Children's Strategy for 2012–2017, and the Concept of Long-Term Social and Economic Development of the Russian Federation until 2020 (Decree of the President 1996; Decree of the President 2012; Order of the Government 2008; Kuchmayeva 2017).

Currently, the regional concepts of family policy have been developed, in particular, in Astrakhan, Kostroma, Novgorod, Samara, Saratov, Chelyabinsk, Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, etc. Modern family policy is aimed at changing and preserving the standard of living of families, increasing their well-being, and improving their social feeling (Borisenkov & Gukalenko 2014).

It should be noted that Russian modern family policy is characterized by two specific features. Firstly,

it is the pluralization of its directions: a campaign on the search for families for orphans, assistance to families with disabled children, the remaining urgent struggle against family poverty, prevention of family deviance, etc. Secondly, the regionalization of family policy, which manifested itself in the transfer of a significant share of responsibility for the state of the family and demographic sphere from the federal center to the regional authorities themselves. Each region should now build its own “family strategy” based on the most acute problems facing it (Noskova 2013).

### **Modern Family Policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan**

The course of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the field of family policy formation is in many ways similar to the experience of the Russian Federation. However, the country has several specific features.

The period from the early 1990s to the early 2000s was characterized by a complex domestic situation that adversely affected the family institution. In particular, in the early years of sovereignty, 1 to 2 million citizens left Kazakhstan. First, the country suffered from mass migration, and then – from a sharp decline in the birth rate (Schmidt, Yarskaya-Smirnova & Chernova 2014). In the first half of the 1990s, there was a decline in life expectancy in Kazakhstan, but since the second half of the 1990s, this indicator has increased (Schmidt, Yarskaya-Smirnova & Chernova 2014).

The period of the 1990s was also characterized by an increase in the level of those never married. The following tendencies were observed: the number of never-married men increased, the proportion of married men decreased, and the indicators of widows and divorced changed insignificantly. Women had similar tendencies. A significant increase in the proportion of never-married women influenced the birth rate, as a result of which there were postponed or extra-marital births (Schmidt, Yarskaya-Smirnova & Chernova 2014).

As for state policy in the family sphere during that period, post-Soviet traditionalism (in its various variations) was, in fact, the dominant form of state ideology in the country's transitional society (Schmidt, Yarskaya-Smirnova & Chernova 2014). In 1995, a Council on Family and Women's Issues and Demographic Policy under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan was established, which in 1998 was reorganized into a National Commission on

Women, Family and Demographic Policy under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan provided with broader authorities (Zhanuzakov 2017).

Currently, in Kazakhstan, state family policy is one of the main priorities of the social sphere. Its characteristic features are neo-traditionalism, pronatalism, and promotion of family integrity (Rezvushkina 2015). The key reference point is the regulatory model of a “strong family” (father, mother, and children) (Uyzbayeva *et al.* 2014). In public, media and academic discourses, it is widely discussed that there is a need to revive the family institution as a stronghold of the nation, in which the woman performs the traditional roles of wife and mother, and the man is responsible for providing financial support to the family (Rezvushkina 2015).

The formation of a systematic family policy started in 2000 when the “Program for the Demographic Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2001–2005” was developed (Schmidt, Yarskaya-Smirnova & Chernova 2014). Its main tasks were:

- 1) stabilization of the birth rate and its growth in the long term to a level that ensures expanded reproduction of the population;
- 2) reduction of the mortality rate, increase in the average life expectancy of the population, improvement of the health of the population;
- 3) strengthening of the family institution;
- 4) reduction of the negative migration balance;
- 5) increase in the quality of life of the population (Schmidt, Yarskaya-Smirnova & Chernova 2014).

The family policy has fully developed after the IV Forum of Women (2005). The outcome of this event was the adoption of the Gender Equality Strategy for 2006-2016. Since 2006 the National Commission on Women, Family and Demographic Policy under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan has been established which acts as a consultative and advisory body. At the same time, in Kazakhstan, a new approach to social security has started to be applied to family policy, which calls for a transition from social assistance to social activation. Programs are directed towards enhancing the labor potential of people, rather than providing assistance.

In general, the Republic of Kazakhstan demonstrates a variety of regulatory legal acts aimed at strengthening the family institution. Since 1999, when the first National Action Plan to improve the status of women in the country was adopted, the legislative framework aimed at strengthening the family and supporting motherhood and childhood has changed significantly. The following laws are being implemented: “On the Rights of the Child”, “On Family-Type Children's Villages and Youth Homes”, “On State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities in the Republic of Kazakhstan”, “On Prevention of Domestic Violence in the Republic of Kazakhstan”, the amended Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Marriage (Matrimony) and Family. The country has ratified several international conventions such as the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention, the Forced Labor Convention, the Equal Remuneration Convention, and others, which created a solid legislative basis for the development of state family policy in the country (Prospects for the development 2014).

The results of an expert survey in the field of family policy also confirmed that in Kazakhstan, as in many post-Soviet states, the problem of protecting the rights of children has become one of the most significant. The spiritual and moral education of the younger generation, the existing violence against women and children, the quality of services rendered in the field of education and health, the fate of orphans and children left without parental care, the procedure of adoption by domestic and foreign parents – these are the problems that draw the attention of the public, expert community and the state (Nechayeva, Kappasov & Aikenova 2014).

Measures are being taken to strengthen the socio-economic situation of families, according to which every working Kazakhstani can provide themselves with housing using an affordable loan.

In 2016, the Concept of Family and Gender Policy until 2030 was approved, which defines long-term goals and objectives, as well as directions for the development of the family and gender sphere. The essence of this document is that, while earlier the family institution was considered solely as an object of social protection, it is now considered primarily in the context of achieving gender equality associated with the process of social modernization (Zhanuzakov 2017).

The focus of modern family policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan has shifted from assisting socially vulnerable and disadvantaged segments of the population to assisting normal, traditional families, who are all well and good from the state.

The country holds an annual “Мерейлі отбасы” contest, which is aimed at reviving moral values, cultivating a positive image of the family and marriage, and raising the status of the family (Zhanuzakov 2017). Since 2013, Family Day is celebrated every second Sunday in September in Kazakhstan (Zhanuzakov 2017).

Currently, there are about 22 thousand non-governmental organizations in Kazakhstan, of which about 300 are engaged in family and gender issues. The main partners of the state are the Association of Business Women of Kazakhstan, the Union of Crisis Centers, the Union of Fathers, the Shyrak Association of Women with Disabilities, etc. The state has been increasing funding for social projects implemented by the non-governmental sector in the field of family and gender policy for a long period. From 2003 to 2017 funding increased by 65 times and amounted to more than 20 billion tenge (Prospects for the development..., 2018). Prospects for the development of family and gender policy until 2030 have been outlined. The most important indicators developed to further modernize family policy include the share of divorces by the number of registered marriages projected to decrease by 32% by 2020, 30% – by 2023, 25% – by 2030; the registered facts of violence against children projected to decrease by 20% by 2020, 30% – by 2023, 50% – by 2030; the proportion of the average wage of women to the wage of men expected to amount to 70% in 2020, 73% – in 2023, 75% – in 2030, etc.

## CONCLUSION

The family institution is going through a period of active transformations. These processes are characteristic of most countries of the world and, in particular, affect the Central Asian region and Russia. Currently, family policy is formed concerning new trends, since states, as before, are interested in the family as a basic social structure. This statement concerns both the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan, which were the focus of this study.

Both countries have gone through a difficult way of developing their family policies, taking into account the

Soviet past and the difficult post-Soviet crisis period. In both states, the process of active family policy formation began in the 2000s. Every year the policies of Kazakhstan and Russia are improved and transformed concerning domestic trends and global experience in this field. The social sphere and the family institution in the two countries face many problems and challenges, but the states have a strong interest in overcoming these problems. Thanks to such actions, the level of support for families is growing but remains lower compared with OECD countries (Family Resource Programs 2018).

It can be said that both countries are interested in increasing fertility, reducing mortality, promoting family integrity, supporting the traditional family institution, as well as improving the well-being of citizens, which would contribute to forming favorable conditions for creating families and implementing the UN's SDGs. The state policies of both countries are characterized by the cultivation of family values among children and youth, the strengthening of marriage and family, the promotion of gender equality, and the expansion of economic, political and social opportunities of the family to develop new trends in the transition to sustainable development and the beginning of a new phase of social responsibility.

At the same time, it should be noted that both Russia and Kazakhstan have many problems in this area that cannot be solved at once and require an integrated approach.

The formation of an adequate family policy is a long process, which in Kazakhstan and Russia was disrupted due to the collapse of the USSR. It took them a long time to stabilize the internal situation and to formulate individual family policies in accordance with the needs of each country. This was preceded by the stabilization of the economic and political situation. In addition, it should be borne in mind that both countries have made the transition from the Soviet model to the development of their own approach.

Currently, both in Russia and in Kazakhstan, there is a high percentage of citizens with incomes below the subsistence level. One of the priority tasks is to improve the well-being of citizens and their standard of living, since it is these factors that affect the increase in the birth rate, in the number of families, etc. The two countries also continue to tackle gender inequality, which is reflected, in particular, in significant wage gaps. At the same time, Kazakhstan is struggling with

the problem of migration, in which a large percentage of young people leave the country for higher living standards.

It should also be noted that both Kazakhstan and Russia aim to preserve and strengthen the traditional family and marriage institution. However, at the present stage, it is being transformed, and the states should take this circumstance into account.

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