

**Center for Economic Institutions**  
**Working Paper Series**

**No. 2015-8**

**“Struggling for New Lives: Family and Fertility Policies in  
the Soviet Union and Modern Russia”**

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**December 2015**



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**Struggling for new lives:  
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**1. Introduction**

The roots of the modern demographic situation in Russia go in history deeper beyond the moment of dissolution of the Soviet Union. In the XX<sup>th</sup> century, periods (often overlapping) of revolution, civil and world wars, famines and purges have induced a permanent lack of population resources as well as existence of pronounced demographic waves. The waves were often amplified by the policies targeting family life and fertility.

From the very beginning of the existence of the Soviet state, the state undertook significant efforts in promotion of women's autonomy as individuals and their ability to support themselves economically, while never leaving out of focus their reproductive function. The Soviet ideology brought about the revolutionary ideas on the models of family formation and children upbringing. During the XX<sup>th</sup> century, Russian women were assigned the triple role of social and political activists, workers, caregivers and mothers. The relative significance of the different roles importance was changing over the history. Men, in a manner rather stable over time, received the role of defenders of the Motherland and main breadwinners.

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I wish to acknowledge the financial support and hospitality of the Institute of Economic Research, Hitotsubashi University (Tokyo) during my visiting research stay that was used for the preparation of this text. I am grateful to Kazuhiro Kumo and Serafia Chirkova for their comments and suggestions.

By the end of the 1960s, a masculinity crisis hit the country and the motto “Take care of men!” (“*Beregite muzhchin!*”) was promoted. Contemporaneously, women continued elaborating strategies to cope with the burden of multiple responsibilities (worker/mother-caregiver), thus either asking for help among relatives, or giving birth to a smaller number of children. It was also in the mid-1960, when - as Vishnevsky (2009) notes - a process of depopulation has started. According to Vishnevsky, the process went through a *latent depopulation* stage from the mid-1960s up to the moment of dissolution of the Soviet Union (sub-period characterized by the decrease of the total fertility rate below the replacement fertility level of 2.15), then through an *evident depopulation* stage up to the mid-2000s (sub-period characterized by the total number of deaths outnumbering the total amount of births), and then developed into *the depopulation aggravation* stage (characterized by a decrease of the number of women in reproductive age since 2004, and decrease of the working age population since 2007; apart of some short-term reversals of the trends due to the favorable dynamics linked to demographic waves).

Under this context, we overview the main steps undertaken by the Soviet and later by the modern Russian governments in order to influence family formation models and fertility levels, and to improve the demographic situation over the period from 1917 until 2015. While up-to-the-date literature contains a handful of studies of historical and modern fertility trends, only scattered facts on the underlying governmental policies can be found, especially in English. The current text provides the first long-term systematic overview of the legislation acts regulating fertility and family sphere in the Soviet Union and modern Russia. The state(s) struggled with a comparatively low fertility and high mortality throughout the last century. However the difference in the state attitude (ideology) and its’ financial capacity in addressing the demographic issues has changed dramatically. Thus we address the Soviet Union and the modern periods in two separate sections. Following the swirls in the demographic policy, we further group the evidence in politically and ideologically more homogeneous sub-periods.

Another characteristics of the overview is that we pay the closest attention to such measures of demographic policy as marriage and divorce regulation, support of families through family benefits and tax system, reconciliation of family and work spheres (maternity/paternity leaves, workplace flexibility measures), fertility promotion, childbearing and childcare support, as well as rare reproductive health protection initiatives<sup>2</sup>. The current text provide the evidence on the demographic

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<sup>2</sup> Other targets of the population policies, such as general health and mortality constitute a separate topic in themselves, while intra-country migration rather reflects labor redistribution than demographic processes. These processes are only marginally mentioned in the text when closely related to family and fertility policies.

policies chronologically, from the October revolution of 1917 up to the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 in Section 2, and starting from the creation of the modern Russia in 1991 up to the present days, 2015, in Section 3. The last section briefly summarizes the main characteristics of the demographic policies of two periods. It concludes with a list of weaknesses of the current policies that should be addressed in the future.

## **2. 1917 – 1991: Soviet period**

### **2.1. 1917 – beginning of the 1930s: political mobilization of women**

The revolution of 1917 brought about wide social changes including new ideas on gender roles and relations between spouses. A range of experiments in the sphere of sexual and family/marriage relations was started (Zdravomyslova and Temkina, 2004).

Women got targeted by state as a distinct population group which was lagging behind men in terms of literacy, political education and participation in political life, as well as being too traditional and concentrated on the private sphere; not yet ready for the Soviet transformation. Women were supposed to be introduced to social and political life with help of state policies. So-called *women question* was formulated but first of all as a political question, though the reproductive function of women was never shadowed by the state. For example, the Decree 'On an eight-hour working day'<sup>3</sup> in 1917 besides the minimum wage and limitation of working hours for both sexes, stated that women and adolescents until the age of 18 were not allowed to be exploited for work in underground conditions and occupations. Further truly revolutionary step was made by the Decree 'On parental leave' and Decree 'On insurance in case of illness'<sup>4</sup>. The Decree established an allowance at the rate of 100 percent of the women's salary for the period of 8 weeks preceding and 8 weeks following the birth of a child. The employer was prohibited to admit/force women into work during this 16 weeks period. For the first nine months after delivery, breast-feeding mothers became eligible to an allowance at the rate of 25-50 percent of their salary. Their working day got legally limited to 6 hours. The 30-minute breaks every three hours for feeding the babies were prescribed.

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<sup>3</sup> *Dekret o vvedenii vos'michasovogo rabocheho dnia*, issued by Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom) on 29.10 (11.11.)1917.

<sup>4</sup> *Dekret o posobii po beremennosti i rodam*, issued by Sovnarkom on 14(27).11.1917 and *Dekret o strakhovanii na sluchai bolezni*, issued by All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK) on 22.12.1917 (04.01.1918).

With the Article 18 of the Constitution of 1918, Soviet citizens of both sexes were exposed to the right, thou also the obligation to work. In order to facilitate the introduction of women to their role of workers, in 1920 a number of quotas was established for women in political and economic spheres; the institute of so-called *Zhenotdel* (Women's Department in the Party) was created to facilitate women's liberation (Hutton, 1996). Working women had been becoming increasingly more economically independent from men.

The increasing economic independence of women was accompanied by the process of desacralization of marriage and enhancement of freedom of private relations. The process was started by two Decree as early as in December 1917: Decree 'On civil marriage, children, and keeping the registry books'<sup>5</sup> and Decree 'On terminating the marriage'<sup>6</sup>. The former Decree, while recognizing the Church-conducted marriages registered earlier, introduced the institute of civil marriage registered by state as the only further legitimate union of two spouses. The decision to marry could have been taken independently of the parental agreement starting from the age of 16 for women and 18 for men. As a symbol of gender equality, wives were not expected anymore to abandon their own surnames in favor of those of their husbands. Children born within and out of wedlock received equal rights. Fact of paternity for illegitimate children could have been recognized and enforced through the court, based only on a request of mother.

The second Decree - On terminating the marriage - revolutionary introduced not only the right of spouses to decide on the necessity of divorce but also to do so without explanation of the reasons to the authorities. The divorce could have been signed through a registrant authority, and was considered in a court only in case of dispute concerning custody over children or division of property. However, the Decree still contained some gender-biased rules, such as entitlement of women - who would remain with no means to support after divorce - to the alimony payments from ex-husbands. Divorced men had no mirroring/respective right.

The first Code of Laws 'On marriage, family life, and forster care rights and obligations'<sup>7</sup> was based on the two above-mentioned Decree and appeared less than

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<sup>5</sup> *Dekret o grazhdanskom brake, o detiakh i o vedenii knig aktov sostoianiia*, issued by VTsIK and Sovnarkom on 18(31).12.1917.

<sup>6</sup> *Dekret o rastorzhenii braka*, issued by VTsIK and Sovnarkom on 16(29).12.1917.

<sup>7</sup> *Kodeks zakonov ob aktakh grazhdanskogo sostoianiia, brachnom, semeinom i opekunskom prave*, Code of Laws approved by VTsIK on 16.09.1918.

one year later in 1918. The Code stated equal rights of the spouses, among all, when deciding on where the family was supposed to reside, on common surname taken by the spouses and by their children (Art. 100). As the novelty, spouses acquired rights over their own property; the “common wealth” concept was abolished (Art. 105). Thus the spouse (usually woman) without wage income, who was only taking care of a house and a plot, while not owning them, was denied the right of property over the fruits of (her) work. In order to get the rights on any possessions, women were forced to start working for a wage (Denisova, 2010).

Children born out of wedlock were reconfirmed their rights on *au par* with legitimate children (Art. 133). Fathers of illegitimate children got obliged to participate financially in provision for children; paternity could have still being recognized by the court only from the words of mother without any additional proves. Child-support could have been assigned to several potential fathers (Art. 140-144).

In order to combat widespread illegal abortions, bringing harmful if not lethal consequences, Decree ‘On artificial interruption of pregnancy’<sup>8</sup> legalized abortion in the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR), first in Europe, in 1920. Right after the legalization, the operation was performed at no costs for women. The initiative brought women to a relatively safe environment of hospitals in urban areas, while illegal abortion procedures were still widespread in rural areas. As it was widely announced, the abortion legalization was a forced measure to deal with a previously soared number of illegal abortions. With the legalization, abortion became a widespread contraception measure. This led to overload of hospitals with the abortion operations by the 1930s. Already since 1924, a special commission was considering every abortion request; the priority right was given to women in bad health and socio-economic conditions. In case of the negative decision of the commission, the abortion operation could still have been executed for payment. In order to mitigate the rapidly increased number of abortions, some restrictions were introduced in 1926: no abortion was allowed for the first pregnancy and for those who underwent the operation within the six preceding months. Abortion became an operation against payment for virtually all starting from 1930. As Gross Solomon (1992) notes, possibly due to historically high fertility rate, “the demographic (as indeed the moral) consequence of legalizing abortion remained a minor theme until the early 1930’s” (p. 60). Quite as the opposite, no contradiction was seen between the legality of abortion and a general commitment of the state to pro-natalist policies.

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<sup>8</sup> *Ob iskusstvennom preryvanii beremennosti*, Decree adopted by Sovnarkom on 18.11.1920.

In Labor Code<sup>9</sup> of 1922, delivery and maternity leave announced in 1917 - eight weeks before and eight weeks after birth of child - got reconfirmed. Additionally, there was a possibility of maternity leave for breast-feeding mothers as well as for mothers of children below the age of 8 in case of unavailability of other person who could take care of the child. Additionally, pregnant women were given the right to oppose business trips and job-related relocations starting from the 5<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy; they should have also been allocated to a less difficult/heavy work than their occupation, though with the same salary as that during six previous months. Quotas protecting women against firing in the process of rationalization were established, in particular for pregnant women and single mothers with children below the age of one.

The Labor Code of 1922 elaborated a number of restrictions on working conditions of women. Women (as well as adolescent men below age of 18) were prohibited for employment during night shifts (allowed only in those industries where there was an urgent production necessity, but not for pregnant or breast-feeding mothers), for jobs potentially harmful for health, and at the occupations performed in underground conditions. Article XIII of the Code proclaimed that women (and men under 18) were banned from especially hard and hazardous for health jobs. The list of banned occupations was supposed to be established by the People's Commissariat for Labour (VTsIK).

The Code of Laws 'On marriage, family life, and foster care rights and obligations'<sup>10</sup> of 1926 further weakened the value of marriage. Definition of marriage included cohabitation, joint housekeeping and upbringing of children (Art. 12). The Code of Laws equalized the rights of those in registered and *de facto* (a testimony could confirm that a man and a woman cohabited) marriages. The registration of marriage remained, however, the main proof of the fact of the marriage; the rights and obligations of the spouses, especially those related to property and children upbringing were recognized only in case of a proved marriage. Such inconsistency of the articles of the Code on definition and consequence of marriage is noted by some researchers (e.g. Dementieva, 2009). The Code also reintroduced - the abolished in 1918 - the mutual (joint) ownership of possessions of a couple, while keeping the individual rights for the private property acquired before marriage (Art. 10). Marriage age for women was raised up to 18 and hence get equated to that of men. Divorces should have been confirmed by the Registry of Civil Deeds (ZAGS), and not by the courts anymore;

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<sup>9</sup> *Kodeks zakonov o trude RSFSR*, Code of Laws adopted by VTsIK on 30.10.1922.

<sup>10</sup> *Kodeks zakonov ob aktakh grazhdanskogo sostoiianiia, brachnom, semeinom i opekunskom prave*, Code of Laws approved by VTsIK on 19.11.1926.

the fact of divorce could have been declared without the mutual consent of both spouses, and even with spouses absent during the decision in its turn initiated by a note of divorce sent to the court by one of the spouses (so-called system of a postcard divorce).

Zdravomyslova and Temkina (2004) argue that in the 1920-1930 the model/image of new Soviet people was under development. The New Soviet woman was seen as a citizen whose responsibility was to produce (economic goods and services) and reproduce (population); children were supposed to become not being a part of a private family, but first of all a part of the Soviet family of people. New Soviet man was seen as a citizen whose responsibility was the military (defense of the Soviet country) and labor mobilization (working for the Soviet country).

The institute of motherhood started its transformed into the “mother-state” combo (women were expected to use public childcare facilities provided by state or workplace from the moment of going back to work), while fatherhood was represented via economic/financial support of a family. The tradition of non participation of fathers in child rearing has started, repeatedly enhanced by the state policies (e.g. Rotkirch, 2000; Ashwin and Lytkina, 2004; Zdravomyslova and Temkina, 2004).

## **2.2. The 1930s – mid-1950s: development of the ‘Soviet family’ concept**

The First Five-Year Plan implementation started in 1929. The Plan aimed at both, rapid industrialization with an emphasis on heavy industry as well as transformation of individual farms into state collective farms. Collective farms, as supposedly more efficient agriculture organizations, would create a surplus of labor force in rural areas; this surplus was intended to be used in urban areas for the purpose of industrialization. Extensive internal migration took place: peasants leading to cities, workers leading to the big construction sites. Especially the latter often lived in a nomadic manner, leaving families behind them. In the literature, authors often emphasize the continuation of the purposeful (through socio-economic policies) weakening of family ties (Zdravomyslova and Temkina, 2004; Dementieva, 2009).

As a solution to the housing problem, *kommunalka* (communal flats) became widespread, assuming several families living in the same flat and sharing kitchen and bathroom facilities. Researchers note that an experience of living in *kommunalka* was comparable to living with an extended family where women bear the traditional roles. Additionally, deficit of consumption goods in pre-war, war, and post-war periods promoted mobilization of traditional division of functions among genders: women saw,



cook, and performed other traditional female functions (Denisova, 2010).

At the same time, women represented “a ‘reserve’ army to be drafted into the economy to sustain rapid economic growth” (Sakwa, 1998, p. 196). During the forced industrialization, the norms banning some occupations and working conditions as harmful for women’s reproductive health were relaxed; those working in potentially harsh and harmful condition would be compensated for by additional days of vacations and other benefits. A movement of women learning typically men’s professions (traitor driver, airplane pilot) arose. Over the 1930-1940, the concept of the ‘Soviet super-woman’ was developed, solidifying the ‘normality’ of the double burden for women. By the end of the first 5-year plan period in 1934 it was officially declared that the “woman question” - in its political part - was solved.

In the 1930s, the state turns to valorization of the institute of registered marriage and of the role of women as mothers of big families. The pro-choice practice established after the abortion legalization was ended with the Abortion Ban<sup>11</sup> of 1936. Abortion was legally allowed only in hospitals and only in case of danger to mother’s health and life. In other cases the fact of abortion became both illegal and anti-patriotic. Mass-media supported the law before and during the implementation. Creation of large families was encouraged; subsequently, a range of measures was introduced including new benefits for large families and single mothers and increased punishment for not paying alimony (child support), as well as some restrictions on the divorce procedure. Vishnevsky et al (2006) argued that the abortion ban was supposed to make a shift in peoples value orientation, displacing the focus from private interests to interests of the country. Young constructors of communism - with a new collective mentality - were needed.

In connection to the Abortion Ban, a criminal responsibility (1000 Rubles of fine or 6 month of corrective labor) was introduced in October 1936 for employers: criminal responsibility for decreasing wages of expectant mothers (those with the work record of at least one year with a pause with no longer than a month), and for rejection of hiring a pregnant women (the rejection based on the fact of pregnancy).

New edition of the Constitution in December 1936, besides the guarantee of equal rights for men and women in all spheres of life, also emphasized the protection of

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<sup>11</sup> *O zapreshchenii abortov, uvelichenii material'noi pomoshchi pozhenitsam, ustanovlenii gosudarstvennoi pomoshchi mnogosemeinyim, rasshirenii seti roditel'nykh domov, detskikh iaslei i detskikh sadov, usilenii ugovnogo nakazaniia za neplatezh alimentov i o nekotorykh izmeneniiakh v zakonodatel'stve o razvodakh*, Resolution adopted by VTsIK and Sovnarkom on 27.06.1936.

mothers and children welfare through maternity leaves and state allowances, especially to large families (Art. 122). Additionally was highlighted an intention to expand the number of daycare centers for children of all ages, and to provide a better medical care for expectant mothers and infants. Though, as researchers note, the promises and reality did not always meet, especially in the rural areas (Denisova, 2010).

Among measures supporting reestablishment of the image of normality of a large family, one may note the Tax for childlessness<sup>12</sup> (*nalog na bezdetnost'*), introduced in November 1941. The 6 percent tax was applied to incomes of men aged 25 - 50, and of married women aged 20 - 45, if their earnings were higher than 70 Rubles per month (the amount of minimum wage)<sup>13</sup>. Tax exemption was given to parents whose children died during the - at that time ongoing - War, to war heroes, and medically incapable.

Women image of mothers (of large families) and primary caregiver was further promoted by the establishment of the honorary title of "Mother Heroine"<sup>14</sup> (*Mat'-geroinia*) in 1944. New medals was introduced: Motherhood medal (I degree: 6 children; II degree: 5 children); Order of Maternal Glory (I class: 9 children; II class: 8 children; III class: 7 children) was established. Honorary title of "Mother Heroine" (Order "Mother Heroine" and a certificate conferred by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union) was awarded to mothers who gave birth and raised 10 or more children. The award was designated upon the fifth birthday of the last child provided that other children (natural or adopted) remained alive, but counting those deceased in the war conflict. Mother Heroines were entitled to a number of privileges in terms of retirement pension, the payment of public utility charges, and the supply of food and other goods.

Length of the temporary disability leave for child delivery and care, which was reduced at the end of June of 1941 until 35 days before delivery and 28 days after, was

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<sup>12</sup> *O naloge na kholostiakov, odinokikh i maloseimeinykh grazhdan SSSR*, Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet from 21.11.1941 and amendments from 08.07.1944. The tax existed until 01.01.1992.

<sup>13</sup> According to the Resolution of the government of the USSR from 29.09.1967, minimum wage of 60 Rubles was fixed starting from 01.01.1968. On the 24th Communist party congress in 1971 the minimum wage was increased until 70 Rub per month (regardless of the economy branch and the geographical location). Since 01.07.1990, the income exemption was increased to 150 rubles. Since 01.01.1991, married women without children were not taxed any more.

<sup>14</sup> *Ob uvelichenii gosudarstvennoi pomoshchi beremennym zhanshchinam, mnogodetnym i odinokim materiam, usilenii okhrany materinstva i detstva, ob ustanovlenii pochetnogo zvaniia 'Mat'-geroinia' i uchrezhdenii ordena 'Materinskaia slava' i medali 'Medal' materinstva'*, Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet from 08.07.1944.

increased up to 35 plus 42 (56 in case of complications or multiple birth) days scheme in 1944; the total duration being still shorter than in pre-war period.

Unlike in the previous regulation, the new state lump sum benefit at birth was to be given to mothers (with husband or widowed) on the birth of already the third - and not the seventh, as before - child. The lump sum and monthly allowances were: 400 Rubles at birth of the 3<sup>rd</sup> child; 1300 Rubles at birth of the 4<sup>th</sup> child and 80 Rub monthly; 1700 and 120 Rubles, respectively, for the 5<sup>th</sup> child; 2000 and 140, respectively, for the 6<sup>th</sup> child; 2500 and 200, respectively, for the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> child; 3500 and 250, respectively, for the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> child; 5000 and 300, respectively, for the 11<sup>th</sup> and further children. The monthly allowances were paid from the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of life of child until the age of 5. The unwed mothers received the right for a monthly assistance in amount of 100 Rubles for one child, 150 Rubles for two children and 200 Rubles for three and more children.

The Decree of 1944 confirmed the plans of extension of the network of childcare institutions, consulting centers and milk kitchens, as well as organization of evening groups in the kinder-gardens and crèches groups for breast-fed children. At the factories and offices employing women crèches, kinder-gardens, rooms for the breast-feeding, and women's personal hygiene rooms were imposed to be organized.

Modification of the eligibility rules for the tax on bachelors, single and childless citizens of the USSR were introduced. As previously, the tax should have been paid by men (20-50 y.o) and married women (20-45) without children (6 percent tax); newly, also incomes of citizens having one (1 percent tax) or two (0.5 percent tax) children became taxable. Tax contribution from farmers were supposed to be paid in form of lump-sum amount its size depending on the amount of paid agricultural taxes. Exempt from payment of the tax was allowed to the following categories of citizens: service men, service officers of army units and military institutions and their wives; women receiving assistance or pension from the state for the support of children; citizens whose children had perished or disappeared on the fronts of the Patriotic War; students of secondary or higher educational institutions under 25 years of age; invalids of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades of disability.

The Decree of 1944, also introduced - first time from 1918 - a range of measures to strengthen the institute of (registered) family. Only officially registered marriages were accepted as legitimate; registration of *de facto* marriages with a note on the length of the latter was enabled. On the moment of registration, a compulsory entry was made in passports of both spouses; details of the respective spouse inserted. Additionally, the law abolished the right of a mother to appeal to the court with a demand for the

establishment of paternity and obtaining alimony for the support of a child, born of a person with whom mother is not cohabiting in registered marriage. As Zakharov (2008) noted, this measure could be considered as restoration of “illegitimate child” status, which was abolished right after the revolution.

The procedure of divorce returned to the public courts. The divorce application, apart of the information on the spouses, again included the motives for the dissolution. A 10 Rubles fee was paid upon the presentation of the notice, 100 to 200 Rubles paid after the decision on the dissolution of the marriage (an amount that constituted roughly 8 to 16 percent of the wage of an engineer<sup>15</sup> in 1944). Wife and husband, as well as witnesses to be summoned for the court examination; court should have made an attempt to reconcile the spouses. The decision of the court was to be published in a local newspaper at expense of the spouse initiated the divorce.

After the end of the war in 1947, a Decree ‘On the amount of state allowance to mothers of large families and to single mothers’<sup>16</sup> stated that while the economy was growing and purchasing power of Ruble increasing, the previously established - in order to account for harsh war conditions - amounts of the benefits became unfair; they also created an excessive burden on the country budget. The Decree halved the amounts of benefits and allowances<sup>17</sup> as compared to the Decree from 07.08.1944.

The amounts of monthly allowances were comparable to the monthly fees for children attendance of kinder-gardens and crèches<sup>18</sup>. Decree of the Soviet of Ministers N 3000 established a flat rate fee, varying on the type of childcare institution and urbanization of the area in amount of 60 Rubles (in urban areas) and 50 Rubles (in rural areas) as kinder-garden fee, and 45 and 30 Rubles as crèche fee, respectively. The Decree also obliged the relevant Ministries to develop a new pay scale related to salaries of parents.

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<sup>15</sup> In 1945, the fees were adjusted to 100 Rubles at the moment of application, and 500 to 1000 Rubles after the dissolution of the marriage. In order to make comparisons to post-war amounts of fees and allowances, take note of the money reform of 1947, when cash was exchanged in the rate of 10:1.

<sup>16</sup> *O razmere gosudarstvennogo posobiia mnogodetnym i odinokim materiam*, Decree of the General Committee of the Supreme Council of USSR from 25.11.1947.

<sup>17</sup> The new amounts became, respectively: 3rd child - 200 Rubles at birth and 0 Rubles monthly; 4th child - 650 and 40; 5th child - 850 and 60; 6th child - 1000 and 70; 7th and 8th child - 1250 and 100; 9th and 10th child - 1750 and 125; starting from the 11th child - 2500 and 150. The allowances to single mothers were adjusted accordingly, becoming 50 Rubles per month for one child; 75 for two children, and 100 Rubles for 3 and more children.

<sup>18</sup> *O razmere platy roditel'ei za sodержanie detei v detskikh sadakh i detskikh iasliakh*, Decree of the Soviet of Ministers N 3000 from 09.08.1948.

In addition, a special instruction<sup>19</sup> was explaining that in case of a place allocated to a child in a childcare facility was not used for reasons other than illness of the child, quarantine, and vacations leave of parents, the parents were supposed to pay the fee in its complete amount.

### **2.3. Mid-1950s – the mid-1960s: Khrushchev Thaw**

At the XX<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party the cult of Stalin was abolished as well as the new intense period of building the Communism proclaimed. Simultaneously, welfare of the citizens had received some attention, and massive housing construction allowed the return of private sphere. A number of measures towards liberalization of family-related legislation were introduced.

One of the important steps consisted in decriminalization of abortion<sup>20</sup> (if undertaken up to 12 weeks of pregnancy) starting from 01.11.1955. Fertility and abortion in particular again became a personal decision of woman. However, lack of sexual education and general contraception unavailability contributed to re-establishment of the culture of abortion as one of the most used instrument of family planning (by the 1960s, abortion was the easiest/most accessible way of contraception, according to Perlman and McKee, 2009).

In February 1955 the length of temporary disability leave for birth and childcare returned to the 56 days before delivery plus 56(70) days after delivery scheme, the standard of 1917. The period of the leave was covered by a temporary disability benefit in amount of 2/3 of the salary; eligibility criteria got extended (the rule of three uninterrupted month of employment record at the current employer for the eligibility was abolished). In case of poorer families, where salary during two months preceding delivery was not exceeding 50 Rubles, a lump-sum benefit of 12 Rubles for newborn care goods and 18 Rubles benefit for newborn feeding were paid to a spouse whose employment record was longer than three month at his/her current employer. However, such work-family reconciliation measure as a paid leave for taking care in case of child sickness was reduced to 3 days only<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Instruction developed by the Ministry of Finance of the USSR, by the Ministry of Health of the USSR, and by VTsSPS, and adopted by Resolution N 3290 of Sovmin on the 31.08.1948.

<sup>20</sup> *Ob otmene zapreshcheniia abortov*, Decree of Presidium of Supreme Soviet from 23.11.1955 and detailed regulation of the issue by the instruction of the Ministry of Health of USSR (*O poriadke provedeniia operatsii iskusstvennogo prepyvaniia beremennosti (aborta)*) from 29.11.1956.

<sup>21</sup> *Polozhenie o poriadke naznacheniiia i vyplaty posobii po gosudarstvennomu sotsial'nomu strakhovaniuu*,

In the mid-1960, a further improvement of social protection of the most vulnerable families was observed. Among the new measures one may cite monthly allowance of 35 Rubles per each child in a family of men in obligatory military service<sup>22</sup> (for the whole period of the service). The length of childcare leave due to delivery and childcare of agricultural workers was equalized to that of the other workers, regardless of the length of their employment record<sup>23</sup> starting from 01.01.1965. In addition, families with disabled (I and II degree of disability) children reached age of 16 were recognized as a separate group eligible for benefits<sup>24</sup>.

In the literature, the end of the 1950s and the 1960s are sometimes referred as the period of crisis of masculinity, of poor men's health and discussion on how to improve it, possibly making wives responsible for husbands' health (e.g. Avdeeva, 2010). In the official discourse, crisis of gender roles is seen through the prism of the demographic crisis. In the mid-1960s, Soviet Union was among the first countries where total fertility rate decreased below replacement fertility (Vishnevsky, 2009).

The new Code of Laws on marriage and family life got into the force starting from 01.11.1969. It declared the necessity to further reinforce the equal position of the spouses within family, and pursue creation of a communist family free from material concerns. Some of the acts of the Stalinist period were canceled. Among others, the application for dissolution of marriage could again be proceeded either through ZAGSes or court. Some measures to defend the socially more vulnerable spouse after the divorce were re-introduced.

#### **2.4. The 1970s: completion of the system of benefits to families**

At the beginning of the 1970s, necessity of development of a consistent demographic policy appeared in discussions. Demographic policy was ambitiously referred to as a 'system of measures directly aimed at shaping the conscious demographic behavior of

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statute adopted by Presidium of All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (VTsSPS) on 05.02.1955, and *Ob uvelichenii prodolzhitel'nosti otpuska po beremennosti i rodam*, Decree of Presidium of Supreme Soviet from 26.03.1956.

<sup>22</sup> *O vyplate posobii na detei voennosluzhashchikh srochnoi sluzhby*, Resolution of the Soviet of Ministers of the USSR N 1108 from 25.10.1963.

<sup>23</sup> *O pensiiakh i posobiiakh chlenam kolokhozov*, Law N 2688-VI from 15.07.1964.

<sup>24</sup> *O meropriiatiakh po dal'neishemu povysheniiu blagosostoianiia sovetskogo naroda*, Resolution of Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and of the Soviet of Ministers of USSR from 26.09.1967.

members of society in a way that suits society' (Smith, 1983, p.1). However, the demographic and family policies were not among the main targets of the social policy at the period. Existing policies suffered from absence of the regional differentiation of the measures according to the regional birth rates and socio-ethical composition of the population (Novikova et al., 1978).

During the 1970s, working conditions of women (and especially for those pregnant) contemporaneously with promotion of the ideology of motherhood as a natural predestination of women came again into the fore. By the end of the decade "saving family", strengthening the institute of marriage, became a priority. As number of marriages started to decrease, the extent of divorces and births out of wedlock attracted particular attention.

Tradition of low contraception culture persisted. Over the 1970s, Ministry of Health took a conservative position regarding oral contraception and disseminated the idea of the contraception pills being contraindicated to 80-90 percent of women due to their direct and indirect health condition. The opinion of the abortion being less harmful to women health than oral contraception was promulgated. Some authors consider this as an indication of fears of the state for (decrease of state control over fertility and) decrease of the number of births if contraception was possible<sup>25</sup>.

In 1973, eligibility for pregnancy and maternity benefits (already in amount of 100 percent of salary) was extended to all women regardless of their employment record and membership status in the trade unions<sup>26</sup>. In addition, agriculture workers also became eligible for the same amount of allowance connected to delivery as industrial workers. The length of a paid temporary disability leave due to necessity to take care of sick child was increased from three to seven days.

Among the legislation acts, adopted over the 1970s, further introduction of subsidies to poor families should be mentioned<sup>27</sup>. A family was considered poor if per capita family income was below 50 Rubles (or 75 Rubles in Extreme North and Far East regions). In 1974, about 5% of population was considered poor according to this criteria. A subsidy

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<sup>25</sup> I. Kon. "Abortion or contraception?", Demoscope, N 123-124, 2003 at URL: <http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2003/0123/analit02.php2> Accessed on: 14.10.2015.

<sup>26</sup> *Ob uluchshenii obespecheniia posobiiami po beremennosti i rodam i po ukhodu za bol'nym rebenkom*, Resolution of the Soviet of Ministers of the USSR N 530 from 26.07.1973.

<sup>27</sup> *O vvedenii posobii na detei maloobespechennym semiam*, Decree of Presidium of the Supreme Soviet from 25.09.1974.

in amount of 12 Rubles<sup>28</sup> per month per child below the age of 8 was introduced starting from 01.11.1974. However, families with two working spouses (average wage of worker was about 190 rubles per month) was generally not eligible for child allowances even if upbringing 4-5 children (Litvinova, 1989). Litvinova noted that allowances to large families were often seen as a tool of fertility stimulation, while their role was primarily social and not demographic.

As for the working conditions of women, a new edition of the list of prohibited jobs was issued in 1978.<sup>29</sup> The Labor Code banned women from occupations that implied lifting and moving of heavy items, night shifts, and other potentially harmful (for reproductive function) conditions. Requirements for the productivity (norms of production) for pregnant women and mothers with children under age of 1,5 should have been either lowered or these women should have been transferred to a job with lighter physical conditions, but with the same average salary until the child is of the age of 18 months. As previously, breaks for lactation with duration of at least 30 minutes each, at least once per three hours were counted as working time. If legal prescription were violated<sup>30</sup>, a compensation in form of additional payments/days of vacations was to be provided. Working mothers received the right to request flexible working schedules in form of a partial week and/or partial working day.

The XXVII Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) in 1972 announced the year 1975 as the International Women's Year. Absence of discrimination against women in all spheres all over the world urged for promotion. Following the UN calls, leadership of the USSR stated a need for a more effective population policies at the 25th (1976) and 26th (1981) Party Congresses. Brezhnev called - in his speech to the 26th Party Congress - for creation of favorable conditions for women in their (triple) role of workers, mothers and housekeepers. In this triad, the professional sphere became the sphere of creativity and self-realization of women (Novikova et al., 1978; Smith, 1983). As for fertility, the paid period of the maternity leave was extended up to one year during the 1976-1980 Five Year Plan, putting the last cornerstone into the system of allowances and benefits to families with children

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<sup>28</sup> When comparing with the amounts cited in previous sections, make note of the monetary reform of 1961 which prescribed exchange of 10 "old" Rubles for 1 "new" Ruble.

<sup>29</sup> List of production processes, professions and works with harmful and/or heavy working conditions, where employment of women is prohibited of 1978 can be, for example, found at URL: <http://www.a-z.ru/women/texts/proftsr.htm> Accessed on: 14.10.2015.

<sup>30</sup> It is widely noted in the literature, that these norms were not always followed in practice. e.g. Marsh, 1996.



summarized in the Constitution of 1977 (Korsanenkova, 2010).

## **2.5. 1981 – 1983: fertility stimulation**

Response to the calls of the Party leaders came in 1981-1983. A new set of measures for family - and especially large family - support, and for creation of better conditions for population growth and education of the youth, was adopted. Improvement of working conditions of mothers and development of a rational combination of state and family-based system for upbringing and education of children were neighboring in legislative acts<sup>31</sup>. The introduced measures of the state help to families with children aimed at compensation of the quality of life/welfare gaps between families with different number of children and at creation of favorable living conditions for young families. A lump sum benefit at birth was established at 50 Rubles to working women and women in out-of-service training already at birth of the 1<sup>st</sup> child, and 100 Rubles at birth of the second and further children (Art. 4). For non-working mothers, the amount of the state lump-sum benefit was fixed at 30 Rubles regardless of the order of the child born; the benefit amount was paid to the working or studying father of the child. For working mothers with employment record above one year, and for women in out-of-service training, a one-year partially paid childcare leave was introduced. The payment was equal to 50 Rubles per month in the Extreme North and Far East regions and to 35 Rubles per month in other areas. The unpaid period of childcare leave became extendable up to 18 month while still being counted as a part of the employment record (for purpose of pension and other benefits calculation). The same resolution introduced several additional benefits for working mothers with two and more children under the age of 12 (Art. 3): an additional 3-day paid leave if the summary length of the vacation leave would not exceed 28 calendar days; priority right to get the vacations days during summer or other requested time-period; additional unpaid childcare leave up to two weeks (with 50 percent of salary paid starting from the 12th Five Year plan period, 1986). In addition, all students of the higher, secondary and vocational training institutions who had children and demonstrated good academic record, were paid a scholarship starting from 1981 (Art. 4).

The Resolution N 235 also contained a suggestion to introduce in the nearest future an exemption from the “Tax on bachelors, single and childless citizens of the USSR” for newly married couples for the first year of marriage.

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<sup>31</sup> For example, see Amendments from 02.09.1981 and 26.01.1983 (N 8723-X) to the Decree from 1947; *O merakh po usileniu gosudarstvennoi pomoshchi semiam, imeiushchim detei*, Decree of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR N 235 from 22.01.1981.

In order to improve living conditions of single mothers, an allowance in amount of 20 Rubles started to be paid from the 01.12.1981 to mothers with children younger than 16 (or 18, in case if studying without scholarship) (Art. 4, Resolution 235). Since 1984, an allowance to unmarried mothers with children whose fathers evaded alimony payment was established<sup>32</sup>. In 1986, eligibility for unmarried single mothers benefits, introduced in 1981, was extended to widows with children that were not receiving a pension for loss of breadwinner.

Apart of the money allowances, the length of childcare leave was increased: 56 days before (proposed to extend until 70 days starting from the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year plan period, so 1986) and 56 days after delivery; 70 days in case of two or more children. The plans for further increase of the length of the leave coincided with the announcement of the further plans for extensive construction of childcare institutions.

Poor families (monthly per capita income below 50 Rubles, or 75 Rubles in Far East and Extreme North regions) got entitled to a monthly allowance of 12 Rubles per child of the age below 8 starting from 01.01.1984. Contemporary the benefits and allowances for large families established by Resolution of the Soviet of Ministers from 25.11.1947 were still in force<sup>33</sup>.

Starting from 1981, a privilege of lower pension age for mothers upbringing either five and more children, or a child born with disability was introduced. The pension could be assigned in case of employment record of at least 5 years and of three uninterrupted years of work by the moment of application for the pension.

In order to solve one of the acute problems, housing, young families (first marriage with both spouses being under the age of 30) were entitled to the priority allocation of a room, or a one-room apartment in case if a child was born within 3 years from the moment of marriage (Resolution 235). Additionally, starting from 1982, the enterprises and collective farms were allowed to lend interest-free loans for improvement of living conditions to young families – with employment record of at least two years at the enterprise - in amount under 1500 Rubles for a period of 8 years. In case of a second child born during the term of the loan, the family would receive a 200 Rubles

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<sup>32</sup> *O vvedenii vremennykh posobii na nesovershennoletnikh detei v sluchaiakh nevozmozhnosti vzyskaniia alimentov s ikh roditel'ei*, Resolution of the Soviet of Ministers N 134 from 06.02.1984.

<sup>33</sup> Namely, regardless of the working status of mother, a lump-sum benefit at birth and monthly allowance were paid: for the 4<sup>th</sup> child - 65 Rubles at birth and 4 Rubles monthly, for the 5<sup>th</sup> child - 85 and 6, for the 6<sup>th</sup> child - 100 and 7, for the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> children - 125 and 10, for the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> children - 176 and 12,50, for the 11<sup>th</sup> and further children - 250 and 15 Rubles, respectively.

deduction, at birth of the third child a 300 Rubles deduction<sup>34</sup>.

The Resolution N 235 from 22.01.1981 also mentioned the necessity of education of the youth in the sphere of sexual upbringing and family life education. The sense of responsibility (family and society), respectful behavior towards women and elderly needed to be propagated. Hence, school program was supplemented by two obligatory courses: 'Hygienic and sexual education' (*Gigienicheskoe i polovoe vospitanie*) at the 8<sup>th</sup> year of schools starting from 1983; 'Ethics and psychology of family life' (*Etika i psihologiiia semeinoi zhizni*) during the two last years of school, the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade since 1985.

Several initiatives were undertaken in sphere of contraception and reproductive health safeguard. Starting from 01.01.1985, women undergoing abortion got entitled to three days of temporal disability leave and a temporary disability benefit for these three days<sup>35</sup>. In cases of spontaneous abortion, abortion due to medical reasons, and cases when women received a salary below the minimum wage level, the allowance was paid for the whole period of the temporary disability. In cases when temporary disability due to abortion lasted more than 10 days, the temporary disability benefit was paid starting from the 11th day of temporary disability.

In 1987, Ministry of Health issued a plan of development of Healthcare system for ten following years; the plan included a paragraph on necessity of fighting aborting and introduction of modern measures of contraception. This was a 180 degree turn with respect to the previous position of the state on contraception and abortion<sup>36</sup>.

## **2.6. Second half of the 1980s: further benefits for working mothers**

Introduction of the new demographic policy in 1981-1983 coincided with the entry in the most fertile age of 20-24 of the numerous cohort born at the end of the 1950s-beginning of the 1960s. The concern on the number of women in fertile age became one of the trends of the second half of the 1980s; previously introduced fertility measures got to be extended and further developed in frame of a socially oriented

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<sup>34</sup> *O srokakh vvedeniia besptotsentnoi ssudy na uluchshenie zhilishchnykh uslovii pri obzavedenii domashnim khoziaistvom molodym sem'am, imeiushchim detei*, Resolution N 156 of the Soviet of Ministers of USSR from 25.02.1982.

<sup>35</sup> *O posobiiaakh po gosudarstvennomu social'nomu strakhovaniuu*, Resolution of the Soviet of Ministers of the USSR N 191 from 23.02.1984.

<sup>36</sup> I. Kon. "Abortion or contraception?", Demoscope, N 123-124, 2003. URL: <http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2003/0123/analit02.php2>

economy. Development of regionally specific programs<sup>37</sup> for birth stimulation was announced as a priority in 1987.

One of the trends of the period is a further enhancement of the system of support measures to the most vulnerable families, namely poor and large ones. Since 1985, the age of children receiving monthly money allowances for poor families was increased from 8 to 12. From 01.01.1986, monthly allowances for children of military servants were augmented up to 35 Rubles<sup>38</sup>. Additionally, a paid (50 percent of salary) temporary leave for taking care of child under the age of 14 during sickness was increased in its length until 14 days. In case of a need for the leave exceeding 14 days, mother would receive a certificate of temporary exemption from work.<sup>39</sup>

Further extension of benefits available to working pregnant women and women with children<sup>40</sup> got into the force in 1987: administration of enterprises could not deny a request of a pregnant women or women with children under the age of 8 to follow part-time schedule of work (lower hours, or number of working days). As a novelty, young mothers with children under the age of one were allowed to work part-time or work distantly at home, with the child care allowance kept.

In 1987 large families and poor families received the right of access to consumer durable goods in shortage, as well as to the right for food supply for children in their 2<sup>nd</sup> year of life. School age children from poor families with single household head upbringing three or more children below age of 16 were entitled the right to receive school/sports/pioneer uniforms, and breakfasts at school without pay<sup>41</sup>.

As it was proposed in 1981, the exemption from the tax of childlessness was extended

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<sup>37</sup> *Ob usilenii raboty po realizatsii aktivnoi sotsial'noi politiki i povyshenii roli gosudarstvennogo komiteta SSSR po trudu i sotsial'nym voprosam*, Resolution of VTsSPS N 825 from 17.07.1987.

<sup>38</sup> *O pervoocherednykh merakh po uluchsheniiu material'nogo blagosostoianiia maloobespechennykh pensionerov i semei, usileniiu zaboty ob odinokikh prestarelykh grazhdanakh*, Resolution N 436 of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, of Soviet of Ministers and VTsSPS from 14.05.1985.

<sup>39</sup> See also: *Ob uvelichenii prodolzhitel'nosti oplachivaemogo perioda po ukhodu za bol'nym rebenkom*, Resolution N 1177 of the Soviet of Ministers and VTsSPS from 20.10.1987.

<sup>40</sup> *O rasshirenii l'got rabotaiushchim beremennym zhenshchinam, imeiushchim maloletnikh detei*, Decree of Presidium of Supreme Soviet of USSR N 7639-XI from 02.09.1987.

<sup>41</sup> *O dopolnitel'nykh merakh pomoshchi maloobespechennym semiam, imeiushchim trekh i bolee detei, vospityvaemykh odnim iz roditel'ei*, Resolution of Soviet of Ministers and VTsSPS N 1137 from 25.09.1986.

on the first year after marriage<sup>42</sup> starting from 01.02.1987.

While indirectly health of the population got improved as a consequence of the alcoholic beverages ban of 1985-1987, no significant initiatives were still undertaken in order to improve the reproductive health. Possibilities for family planning were virtually nonexistent due to lack of information, specialized medical services, and modern contraception methods; abortion stayed the main mean of contraception<sup>43</sup>.

In contemporary analytic publications (e.g. Litvinova, 1989), a moderate critics of the family and fertility policy measures appeared. Regional differences were emphasized to be not yet adequately incorporated into the policies in order to cover regional dissemblance (while in RSFSR a number of desired children was under 2, in Republics of Central Asia it was about 7 – fertility level close to the reproductivity limit). In addition, the author criticized persistent lack of housing for young families, inactive propaganda of family planning and contraception different from abortion. The suggestion was to correct the legal and social mechanisms of fertility stimulation in a way to get 2-3 children from each physically and morally healthy family, and not a maximum of children from a maximum of families. The author (Litvinova) was suggesting an introduction of a child allowance of significant amount already for the first child and possibility to take a child care leave not only for mothers but also for fathers and grandmothers.

## **2.7. 1989-1991: regional specifics in fertility stimulation**

Regional specifics in fertility stimulation measures finally appeared in legislative documents starting from 1989-1990: regional (republic) governments got allocated more freedom in establishment of allowances and privileges, more differentiated regional coefficients for the centralized state allowances were introduced. A number of resolutions<sup>44</sup> further promoted advancement of maternal and children health and social

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<sup>42</sup> *O dopolnitel'nykh l'gotakh po nalogu na kholostiakov, odinokikh i malosemeinykh grazhdan SSSR*, Decree of Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of USSR from 13.01.1987.

<sup>43</sup> I. Kon. "Abortion or contraception?", *Demoscope*, N 123-124, 2003. URL: <http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2003/0123/analit02.php2>

<sup>44</sup> *O neotlozhnykh merah po ulutsheniju polozheniya zhenshin, ohrane materinstva i detstva*, Resolution of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR N 1420-1 from 10.04.1990, esp. Art. 7; *O dopolnitel'nykh merah po obespetsheniju social'noj zashishennosti semej s detjmi v svjazi s perehodom k rynotshnoy ekonomike*, Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the USSR N 759 from 02.08.1990; see also Art. 71 of Labour Code from 22.05.1990; Art. 165, 166, 167 of the Labour Code of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic.

protection of families with children; the emphasis was made on the specificity of the period, namely transition to a regulated market economy until 2000. The measures developed were not fully implemented due to the political changes the country overcame.

Resolution 1420-1 further increased the ante-partum leave (70 days starting from 01.12.1990) and postpartum leave (56 days; 70 days in case of complications or multiple births). The leave should have been granted to women in its total summary length regardless of the number of days used by women for ante-partum leave. Childcare leave was also extended from 1989: the paid period - up to 1.5 years, the unpaid period - up to 3 years with the right to restart working at the same position in the enterprise. In a revolutionary manner, the childcare leave became the parental leave, making not only mothers but fathers and other close relatives eligible (Resolution N 1420-1, Art. 7). Unlike in the previous periods, when flat rate benefits were widespread, the new allowance calculation procedures became linked to the amount of the minimum wage and hence indexed for inflation (for example, childcare benefit up to the age of 1,5 years of the child became equal to one minimum wage up); regional coefficients should have been also applied. In case of birth of two or more children allowance should have been paid for each child. Another novelty introduced allowed to parents without employment record as well as those who had less than one year of employment record to be also eligible for the allowance in amount of 50 percent of minimum wage. The law extended the right of working mothers to request flexible (part-time day/week) working schedules until the child reached the age of 14.

For the social (and pension) protection of mothers, the law keep the employment time record as uninterrupted for the means of calculation of allowances in case of interruption of working contract in order to take care of a child until the age of 14 (or 16 in case of child with disabilities) in case if the women restarted working until the child reaches the mentioned age (Art. 8).

The Resolution N 759 abolished the allowance paid to large families starting from the birth of the 4th child until the age of 5 (established in the 1947). The outdated allowance was replaced by a series of allowances and grants. Starting from the 01.12.1990 a grant in amount of 3 times minimum wage (thus 210 Rubles) paid at child birth was established. Starting from the age of 1,5 years of a child (the moment when the paid childcare leave period would be completed), each child under the age of 6 in families with per-capita family income below two times minimum wage was entitled to a monthly allowance in amount of 50 percent of minimum wage. Regional coefficients should have been applied to adjust the allowances to the living standards of the regions.

Additional measures for most vulnerable families included an increase of the monthly state allowance to single mothers (until the age of 16 of the child; or until 18 if the child was studying without scholarship). Monthly allowance of 12 rubles per child up to the age of 12 in poor families with per capita monthly family income below 50 Rubles (for families in Extreme North, Far East, and Siberia the threshold of 75 Rubles) was kept. Families with per capita family income lower than 60 Rubles were exempted from the monthly fee for childcare institutions; families with four children and more received a 50 percent deduction of the fee payments<sup>45</sup>.

Some privileges for mothers of multiple children were included into the Law on "Pension provision" (Par. 18): mothers of 5 and more children who took care of them until the age of 8, and mothers of disabled children that took care of them until the age of 8, had the right of early retirement at the age of 50 in case of employment time record of 20 years accumulated (including the time of childcare), or in case of the time record of 15 years (with childcare not included). Moreover, time spent for childcare (until the age of 3 of each child; or until 6 year in total for several children) was included into the employment time record, as well as the time of care for a child with disability until the age of 16. Mothers Heroines received the right for a social pension equal in its amount to old-age pension.

New tax deductions were also established<sup>46</sup>: complete exemption for Mothers Heroines and persons with innate disabilities for all income sources (starting from 01.01.1991), 30 percent reduction of the tax for large families with three and more children and single mothers with two and more children under age of 16.

The main tendency of the legislative documents of the time period of 1990-1991 was an orientation towards the increasing length of childcare leave and absence of efforts for integration of women into market economy (e.g. Posadskaya, 1992). Such strategy could contribute to lowering the women's unemployment figures, but also likely deepened inequality between two sexes. Women's competitiveness in the labour market decreased; women - in particular those with children - were becoming increasingly expensive as the labor force due to right to work partial working day, flexible working hours, taking additional days of absence for family reasons, and additional days of holydays. In reality, mechanism of implementation of protectionist

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<sup>45</sup> *O razmerakh platy roditelei za sodержanie detei v doskol'nykh uchrezhdeniiakh*, Resolution of the Soviet of Ministers of USSR N 47 from 13.01.1990.

<sup>46</sup> *O podokhodnom naloge s grazhdan SSSR, inostrannykh grazhdan i lits bez grazhdanstva*, law of the USSR N 1443-1 from 23.04.1990.

schemes in reality was widely missing. Apart from the relative competitiveness drop, women remained banned from some of the jobs through the list of prohibited occupation inherited from the Soviet times. The existence of the list itself was in violation with the Constitution of the Russian Federation<sup>47</sup>. Some inconsistencies persisted: women, while virtually not allowed into oil-drilling industry (characterized by high wages offers a number of benefits including shorter working hours, longer holidays, and earlier retirement), were welcomed into other potentially dangerous occupations such as medicine (poorly paid, often bad working condition).

Among the projects that were not realized in full (Resolution 1420-1; see footnote 44) was further development of the network of childcare institutions of all levels as well as the medical ones, and the construction and modernization of the latter (planned for 1991-1992); a system of allowances for relatives providing childcare up to the age of 3; a new system of allowances to families with children with disabilities raising children within their families.

### **3. 1992 – 2015: Modern Russia**

#### **3.1. 1992 – 2000: children’s welfare as priority**

Russian Federation inherited the main principles and directions of the demographic policy from the Soviet Union, though in 1991-1992 the pro-natalist policy of the Soviet state in fact ended.

Following the Article 7 of the Constitution, principles of a social state (*sotsial’noe gosudarstvo*) were laid in the background of the new policies. New concept of state family policy was developed<sup>48</sup>, based on the following principles: family is autonomous in decision making; child’s interests, regardless of age and sex, are pursued; all family types have equal rights in their access to the state support; social assistance is differentiated in accordance to family characteristics; men and women are equal in sharing housekeeping responsibilities and in the opportunities of employment; social assistance includes a number of measures covering all the spheres of family vital functions. In line with the new Concept, a number of Decree and policies targeted

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<sup>47</sup> See reports from the United Nations’ Committee of the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

<sup>48</sup> Government of the Russian Federation developed a “Concept of state family policy” (*Koncepcija gosudarstvennoj semejnoj politiki*) (1991) was accepted on the 12.05.1993 by the National Advisory Board on preparation of the International year of family. Reinforced by the Decree N 712 of the President of the Russian Federation from 14.05.1996 “On the main directions of family policy” (*Ob osnovnyh napravlenijah gosudarstvennoj semejnoj politiki*).



welfare of children and mothers.

Presidential Decree 'On top-priority tasks for development of education system of RSFSR' <sup>49</sup> urged, among all, for development of a Federal Program 'Children of Russia'. The main goal of the Federal Program became maintenance of social guarantees for children, their access to education and health care, respect of the children rights. The Target program "Children of Russia"<sup>50</sup> existed from 1994 until 2010, changing its focus to the most urgent issues. It included six sub-programs: (1) Family planning (*Planirovanie sem'i*), (2) Children of the North (*Deti Severa*), (3) Children with disabilities (*Deti-invalidy*), (4) Orphan children (*Deti-siroty*), (5) Children of Chernobyl' (*Deti Chernobylia*), (6) Baby food industry (*Industria detskogo pitaniia*). In addition, program 'Anti-AIDS' (*Anti-SPID*) and some others targeted the amelioration of the population health, morbidity, mortality, and health services provision.

An extensive system of childcare allowances and benefits was simplified. Starting from 01.01.1994, a unified monthly allowance for children was introduced<sup>51</sup> instead of a set of previously existed allowances and benefits, such as a) monthly allowance for children in the age of 1.5-6 years; b) monthly allowance for children of single mothers; c) monthly allowance for children, whose parents evade alimony payments; d) state allowance for children of military on compulsory service; e) state allowance for children under tutelage ; f) allowance for children with AIDS below age of 16; g) monthly payments for children not eligible for benefits or pensions below age of 16 (studying, but not getting scholarship due to poor academic progress under age of 18; for students of establishments of general educational - until completion of the education); j) monthly compensations for children nourishment/food to families with children below age of 3; k) quarterly compensation for price increase in goods of children-related assortment to families with minor children; l) yearly compensations for clothing; m) allowances for non working mothers with children below 1.5 years old. The new unified monthly allowance was paid for each child – natural or adopted - dependent on family support, from the birth of the child until the age of 16 (or until completion of the studies). The allowance was paid independent on eligibility of the child to a pension scheme (social, either pension due to breadwinner loss) or/and to

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<sup>49</sup> *O pervoocherednykh merakh po razvitiu obrazovaniia v RSFSR*, Presidential Decree N 322 from 26.12.1991.

<sup>50</sup> *O prezidentskoi programme 'Deti Rossii'*, Presidential Decree N 1696 from 18.08.1994.

<sup>51</sup> *O sovershenstvovanii sistemy gosudarstvennykh sotsial'nykh posobii i kompensatsionnykh vyplat semiam imeiushchim detei, i povyshenii ikh razmerov*, Presidential executive order N 2122 from 10.12.1993.

alimony payments. Amount of the allowance was fixed at 70 percent of minimum wage for children under 6 y.o. and 60 percent for children of 6-16 y.o.

In order to improve reproductive health and promote modern methods of contraception different from abortion, sexual education was included into the school teaching plans in framework of the Federal Target program “Family planning” (a sub-program of the Federal program “Children of Russia”). However, financing of the “Family planning” Program was suspended in 1998 after an extensive critic from the side of the Russian Parliament (*Federal’noe Sobranie*) and Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>52</sup> Federal Target Program “Safe motherhood” (*Bezopasnoe materinstvo*)<sup>53</sup> promoted new methods of contraception, and general attention to reproductive health among women, though a particular attention was paid to the prevention of abortions.

Larger and poorer families were targeted by a special Federal Program since 1999<sup>54</sup>. The additional benefits varied across regions and included, among others, discounts on day care and public transportation, subsidies for childcare institutions fees, social scholarships to students.

### **3.2. 2000: Concept of demographic policy until 2015 - combating the demographic crisis**

Regardless of the yearly natural loss of about 400,000 people during 1992-2000, the demographic projections of the second half of the 1990s were still rather optimistic, though even those did not predict a further reverse of the trend and the population increase (e.g. Pirozhkov and Safarova, 2006). Mass-media and government have started to be concerned about the demographic situation describing it as a “demographic crisis” (Isola, 2008).

In order to handle the situation, a set of legislative documents envisaged the main narrow points and priorities for the further development and national security of Russia.

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<sup>52</sup> See, for example, Nina Krivelska “Planirovanie sem’i” - demografitsheskaja vojna v Rossii (Family planning - a demographic war in Russia), 16.10.1997, *Analiticheskii vestnik* 21, Federal’noe sobranie - Parlament Rossiiskoi Federatsii Gosudarstvennaia Duma.

<sup>53</sup> *O federal’noi tselevoi programme ‘Bezopasnoe materinstvo’ na 1995-1998 gody*, Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation N 1173 from 14.10.1994, *O federal’nykh tselevykh programmakh po uluchsheniiu polozheniia detei v Rossiiskoi Federatsii na 1988-2000 gody*, Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation N 1207 from 19.09.1997.

<sup>54</sup> *O gosudarstvennoi sotsial’noi pomoshchi*, Federal Law N 178 from 17.07.1999.

The Concept for demographic policy of the Russian Federation until 2015<sup>55</sup>, announced in September 2001, was intended as the guidelines for the country government and local authorities in their efforts to stabilize the population and to create favorable conditions for the population growth. Main focus was put on three spheres:

1. Fertility regulation and strengthening of family ties, families' support, including:
  - Promotion of family model with at least two children as a societal norm.
  - Improvement of life standards, quality of family life, and stability of the labor market.
  - Creation of favorable socio-economic conditions for the youth's education, professional development, and housing.
  - Creation of working conditions allowing to combine work and family responsibilities for families with children.
  - Development of strategies targeting family placement of orphans.
2. Health and longevity of the population.
3. Migration and population distribution.

Importance of propaganda (mass-media) for the success of the Concept implementation was stated explicitly. Promotion of a higher social value of children was supposed to convince individuals to reconsider their priorities and diminish the perception of children as obstacles for achievement of other personal goals. In framework of Family Planning Program (2002), television and radio programs on topical issues of family planning were broadcasted.

At the same time, with a motivation of increase of the number of births,<sup>56</sup> 9 of 13 reasons women could apply for a legal abortion from the 12th to the 20th week of

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<sup>55</sup> Presidential Decree N24 "Concept of national security of the Russian Federation" (*O koncepcii nacional'noi bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federacii*) from 10.01.2000 and Concept for demographic policy of Russian Federation for the period until 2015 (*Kontseptsiiia demograficheskogo razvitiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii na period do 2015 goda*) URL: <http://demoscope.ru/weekly/knigi/koncepciya/koncepciya>

<sup>56</sup> *Peretchen'sotsial'nykh pokazanii dlia iskusstvennogo preryvaniia beremennosti*, Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation N 485 from 11.08.2003.

pregnancy were abolished in 2003. Such social reasons as disabled child in family, unemployment, very low income (lower than live subsistence level in the region), three children in family, inappropriate housing (e.g. no own flat, living in a dormitory) were removed from the law. Only the following reasons were still kept: disability of husband (I-II group of disability), death of husband during pregnancy, pregnancy which followed a rape, court decision on termination of parental rights, pregnant women being in a jail. In the foreign press the Decree was seen as a sign of an increase of the Russian Orthodox church influence<sup>57</sup>. Perlman and McKee (2009) argued that “national concern about declining fertility has led to policies that may have detrimental effects on family planning. For example, government financial incentives encourage women to have more children, legislation enacted in 2003 reduced the number of indications for legal abortion, and the government has expressed little support for and sometimes actual opposition to family planning programs” (p. 41). At the same time, a high abortion rate in Russia signaled the urgent need to improve the awareness of the population about the modern family planning methods.

As researchers note, in 2004 there was still a potential for a further fertility increase, as actual number of children per woman was lagging behind the ideal number of children women wanted to have (Maleva and Siniavskaia, 2006). Among the factors that were hampering such an increase, there were often cited unfavorable men to women ratio and poor housing conditions (UNDP, 2008, p 21). It was emphasized that policymakers should have not relied only on the financial methods of the fertility stimulation.

### **3.3. Second half of the 2000s: birth certificate and maternity capital**

While in 2004 a number of women in fertile age started to decrease the official statistical body, Russian Federal State Statistics Service (*Rosstat*) was predicting a continuous growth of the birth rate until 2016<sup>58</sup>. However, in 2006, the total fertility rate per woman was only 1.3, with the highest age-specific fertility for the age ranges 20-24 and 25-29 being 85 and 77 *promille*, respectively, These number were nearly twice lower than in 1970: 153 and 110, respectively, when total fertility per woman was equal to 2<sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> Low-birth Russia curbs abortions, by Nick Paton Walsh, 27.09.2003 The Guardian. URL: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/sep/24/russia.nickpatonwalsh> Accessed on: 14.10.2015.

<sup>58</sup> Later, the official forecasts were revised to predict 2011 being the last year of fertility growth.

<sup>59</sup> Source: World Fertility Patterns 2009, URL: <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/worldfertility2009/world> Accessed on: 14.10.2015

It is in 2006 when the public interest was attracted to the problem of depopulation by a number of politicians, such as President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin and Chairman of the Council of Federation Sergey Mironov, who called for the active actions to fight the problem. Mironov stated in his February 2006 interview “Family is the basis of the state” that for the previous 15 years Russia had no consistent and efficient demographic policy, and demographic situation was not considered a priority by a majority of politicians. Mironov underlined that both relevant Presidential Decree and the Concept of Demographic policy until 2015 (issued in 2001), were not more than a declaration of intentions. According to his opinion, demographic situation was developing spontaneously, driven by the unstable economy, aggressive mass culture, and propaganda of consumerism. Mironov called for the creation of favorable economic and social conditions in order to get a fertility increase. In April 2006, President Putin stated in his Address to the Federal Assembly that Russia urgently needed a range of the long-term programs targeting both an increase of fertility rate and a decrease of mortality, and creation of the attractive conditions for migration<sup>60</sup>. Demographer Sergei Zakharov (2006) wrote that it was the first time in the post-Soviet Russia when the pro-natalist position of government was so clearly stated and an emphasize was done on fertility stimulation and not on the families support.

Contemporaneously, Russian government has made improvement of the health of the population a national priority. The National Priority Project “Health” was launched in January 2006, with a budget equating to more than 400 billion rubles over 2006-2009. This substantial injection of finances to the Russian health system has funded the main activities of the project: augmenting of the salaries of primary and emergency care physicians; facilitating the purchase of primary care equipment; buttressing vaccination programs; providing free medical examinations; constructing new high-tech centers for tertiary care; and promoting fertility.

The birth certificate (*rodovoi sertifikat*) was introduced in the frame of the National Programme “Health” since 01.01.2006<sup>61</sup>. The main goal of this financial instrument has been an amelioration of the quality of medical service during prenatal observation,

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<sup>60</sup> Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, 10.05.2006. Text: <http://archive.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2006/05/105546.shtml>

<sup>61</sup> See the official site of the National Programme “Health”: <http://www.rost.ru/projects/health/p04/p34/a35.shtml> and Warrant “Birth certificate” N 701 from 28.11.2005 by Ministry of Healthcare and Social Development of the Russian Federation, and its recent amendments Law N 20221 from 22.03.2011. See also: <http://fss.ru/ru/fund/activity/14142/14143/index.shtml> documents related to the certificate.

delivery and the first year of life of newborn. To achieve the goal, a payment for the services was supposed to be transferred to the hospitals and doctors deliberately chosen by patients (not obligatorily linked to the place of residence, as before). An indirect goal was to discourage women from abortion. The certificate itself initially consisted of two coupons intended to cover, though partially, the expenses of women in health centers for prenatal visits (*zhenskaia konsul'tatsiia*) (2,000 Rubles, or about 65 euros) and in maternity hospital (5,000 Rubles). The nominal value of the certificate was augmented several times (e.g. up to 10,000RUR in 2007; up to 11,000RUR in 2008) and a third ticket for being used in a pediatric clinics was added in 2011 (1000 Rubles) intended for medical check-ups for babies under 1 y.o., in order to decrease infant mortality and to improve health of newborns.

The second new important scheme, maternity capital, introduced from the 01.01.2007 by Federal Law on Additional Measures of State Support for Families with Children<sup>62</sup>, offered a certificate for a sum of 250,000 RUR (about 8000 euro) – subject to inflation correction every year<sup>63</sup> – to mothers of the second and subsequent children. The certificate can be, at the moment when child reaches the age of 3 or later, disposed to one of the three following purposes: improvement of housing conditions (partial payment for a mortgage), as a payment for children's education, or as the pension contributions of mother. A family is entitled to maternity capital certificate in case of the birth (or adoption) of a second child (or third or subsequent child, if the family had not previously used its right to receive these funds) between 01.01.2007 and 31.12.2016. It is worth to emphasize that a family would be eligible to receive the certificate only once; moreover, in framework of this program no cash allowances are paid to women at birth of their children.

Other measures proposed during the period:

- A discussion on the reintroduction of the tax for childlessness (abolished in 1992) was started by Minister of Health Mikhail Zurabov and Deputy Chairman of the State Duma Committee for Health Protection Nikolai Gerasimenko, although the measure did not find a support from the other deputies<sup>64</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> *O dopolnitel'nykh merakh podderzhki semei, imeiushchikh detei*, Federal Law N 256 "" N 256-FZ from 29.12.2006 (latest version/edition from 01.07.2011).

<sup>63</sup> For example, it was an amount of 408960 Rubles in 2013; 387640 Rubles in 2012.

<sup>64</sup> "Tax on childless couples may be reintroduced in Russia", The Guardian, 29

- More constraints for the abortions were introduced in mid-2009 in framework of the Program Sanctity of motherhood, although only in two regions of Russia (Krasnoyarsk region and Volgograd oblast) by the Ministry of Healthcare and Social Development including a compulsory consultation with a (religious representative) psychologist in order to make women to change their decisions<sup>65</sup>.
- Some measures of family support were revised in 2006, leading to an augment - and a wider coverage - for the allowances on children under 1.5 y.o.; so part-time workers and working at home also became eligible for the child care allowances. The procedure of payment of the allowance at birth and childbearing was simplified<sup>66</sup>. However, by mid-2007, childcare and families allowances were still too low (constituted only an insignificant share of incomes) and childcare facilities (e.g preschool facilities) were insufficient (e.g. UNDP, 2008, p.10). From the 01.01.2007, non-working mothers could receive a monthly child benefit of 1500 Rubles for the 1st child and 3000 for the second child (up to the age of 1.5 years). Pregnant women were eligible for a lump sum benefit of 300 Rubles for a registration at medical institutions during the early terms of pregnancy (maximum of 12 weeks).

In October 2007 a new 'Concept for Demographic policy up to 2025' was adopted<sup>67</sup>. The concept claimed to take a systematic approach to the demographic problems, while paying a particular attention to the heterogeneity of the regional development, and to the interaction of the governmental bodies and civil society instituted of all levels.

Goals of the new Concept included:

- Stabilization of population at 142 - 143 million people by 2015; Creation of

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<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/sep/28/mainsection.international11>; "Federation Council speaker opposes childlessness tax in Russia", Rianovosti, 21.09.2006 <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20060921/54135819.html>

<sup>65</sup> See also a website of the Programme "Sviatost' materinstva" <http://kfcnsr.ru/>, and especially program "You are not alone (*Ty ne odna*)" - obligatory pre-abort consultations.

<sup>66</sup> *Ob obiazatel'nom sotsial'nom strakhovanii na sluchai vremennoi netrudosposobnosti i v sviazi s materinstvom*, Federal Law N 255 from 29.12.2006.

<sup>67</sup> *Ob utverzhenii Kontseptsii demograficheskoi politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii na period do 2025 goda*, Presidential Decree N 1351 from 09.10.2007.

prerequisites for further growth of the population and increase of the population up to 145 millions by 2025.

- Increase of longevity (70 years by 2015, 75 years by 2025); decrease of mortality (by 30% by 2015 and 1.6 times by 2025, with 2006 as the base); and increase of fertility (1.3 times by 2015, 1.5 times by 2025 while using the indicators of 2006 as the base).

Three stages of the program realization have different focus:

1. Stage I (2008 – 2010): focus on decrease of the population losses and increase of migration flows (e.g. improvement of diagnostics of diseases, amelioration of working conditions).
2. Stage II (2011 – 2015): focus on stabilization of the demographic situation (e.g. improvement of the population health).
3. Stage III (2016 – 2025): focus on prevention of a possible deterioration of the situation and evaluation of already implemented projects (e.g. stimulation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and further children birth).

The Concept of demographic development up to the year 2025 was, however criticized. A number of experts pointed out that even in case of active and efficient demographic and migration policies implementation a recovery from crisis and stabilization of population were unlikely (Vishnevsky 2009, UNDP, 2008). In addition, the focus on short-term consequences was warned against. The experts noted that current policies might stimulate only change of the timing of births, but not the desire to have more children. This may only amplify or create new demographic waves in the Russian situation when generations with different demographic destinies live contemporary. This is a very unfavorable characteristics of the Russian social and demographic realities, which are rarely taken into account by politicians (Vichnevski, 2009; Botev, 2007, 2008).

#### **3.4. 2007-2010: Program of demographic development until 2025, Stage I**

List of the measures to implement during the Stage I (2007 – 2010) of the Concept's Program included, among all: improvement of medical care during pregnancy and delivery; improvement of the system of social support of families with children; prevention of family problems and child abandonment; promotion of female employment for mothers with children under 3 y.o.; measures on strengthening families, popularization of family values.



Some additional measures were supposed to be undertaken in frame of the Federal Program “Children of Russia”<sup>68</sup> in 2007 – 2010 which intended to create favorable conditions for multi-dimensional development of children, as well as state support of children in difficult life situations. The Program was supposed to contribute to the socio-economic development of Russia through the following channels: improvement of demographic situation (lowering of mortality of newborn, children, and mothers; improvement of their health conditions); improvement of social climate in the society (decrease in numbers of neglected children and orphans); particular attention to conditions of children and families in difficult life situations. The Program included three sub-programs: Healthy Generation (*Zdorovoe pokolenie*), Gifted Generation (*Odarennye deti*), Children and family (*Deti i semya*).

Since 2007, families with children got entitled to the partial compensation of the fees for attendance of kinder-gardens: 20% for the first child, 50% for the second, and 70% for the third child<sup>69</sup>.

In the 2008, the childcare allowance system was reinforced by two more measures<sup>70</sup>: a lump-sum allowance to pregnant (under 180 days) wives of citizens in the obligatory military service (14000 Rubles in 2008), and monthly allowance to families - with children under the age of 3 - of citizens in obligatory military service (6000 Rubles in 2008). Both allowances are corrected for inflation and paid regardless of an amount of the other allowances received by the mother. It is important to note, that the introduction of the two allowances followed an amendment to the legislation that canceled a postponement of the military service for men whose wives were pregnant (less than 26 weeks) or had children under the age of 3.

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<sup>68</sup> Site of the Program: <http://fcp.economy.gov.ru/cgi-bin/cis/fcp.cgi/Fcp/ViewFcp/View/2007/210>; See Resolution N 172 from 21.03.2007

<sup>69</sup> *O poriadke i usloviakh predostavleniia v 2007 godu finansovoi pomoshchi iz federal'nogo biudzheta v vide subsidii biudzheta sub'ektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii na vyplatu kompensatsii chaste roditel'skoi platy za sodержanie rebenka v gosudarstvennykh i munitsipal'nykh obrazovatel'nykh uchrezhdenii, realizhuiushchikh osnovnuiu obshcheobrazovatel'nuiu programmu doskol'nogo obrazovaiia*, Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation N 846 from 30.12.2006; see also amendments from 19.05.2007.

<sup>70</sup> *O poriadke predostavleniia v 2008 godu sibventsii iz federal'nogo biudzheta biudzheta sub'ektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii na vyplatu edinovremennogo posobiia beremnoi zhene voennosluzhashchego, prokhodiashchego voennuiu sluzhbu po prizyvu, i ezhemesiachnogo posobiia na rebenka voennosluzhashchego, prokhodiashchego voennuiu sluzhbu po prizyvu*, Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation N 326 from 30.04.2008, and *Ob utverzhdenii Polozheniia o naznachenii i vyplate gosudartvennykh posobii grazhdanam, imeiushchim detei*, Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation N 865, amendments from 16.04.2008, in particular Art. VI.

In framework of promotion of family values, the year 2008 was announced as “Year of Family”<sup>71</sup> by a Presidential Decree from the second half of 2007. Programs of promotion of family values and development favorable conditions for large families were in the focus; regional level of the development and implication of the initiatives was stated.

During the Year of Family, the new Order of Parental Glory was established<sup>72</sup>; this was the way to reintroduce in a new manner the Mother Heroine title abolished in 1991. The Order is awarded to parent(s) or adoptive parent(s), regardless of the official status of the union, for a successfully raising a large family with seven or more children as citizens of the Russian Federation. A grant of 50,000 Rubles was accompanying the Order (since 01.01.2013 - 100,000 Rubles). A family is eligible for the award when the seventh child reached the age of three, and other children are alive, except of the cases when older children were killed or missing in action in defense of the Motherland or its interests, in the performance (or in the consequence of the performance) of military, official or civic duties. Adequate level of healthcare, education, and harmonious development of children is also taken into account. During 2008, eight families from eight different Russian regions were awarded the Order. In 2010, the Medal of the Order of Parental Glory was established<sup>73</sup>. The Medal is awarded for successfully raising a family with four children.

After two years since the introduction of the birth certificate scheme, the official sources published a positive evaluation of the implementation results. The scheme covered 92.7% of pregnant women in 2008<sup>74</sup>; a great improvement in work of health centers for prenatal visits and maternity hospitals was reported. A number of clinics and consultation centers was renovated and the equipment upgraded, especially in the area of neonatal screening and diagnostics (in 2006 – 2008: 1,148.9 million of Rubles (about 48 millions of euro) spent in frame of the Program “Children of Russia”). The official reports underlined a gradual but steady improvement of women’s health (e.g. 36.8% of births without pregnancy complication in 2008 against 35.1% in 2006),

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<sup>71</sup> For more information, see website of the “Year of Family” program: <http://www.semya2008.ru/>

<sup>72</sup> *Ob uchrezhdenii ordena ‘Roditel’skaia slava’*, Presidential Decree N 775 from 13.05.2008.

<sup>73</sup> *O merakh o sovershenstvovaniiu gosudarstvennoi nagradnoi sistemy Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, Presidential Decree N 1099 from 07.09.2010.

<sup>74</sup> See report on the implementation of the measures of the Stage I on the website of the Ministry of the Economic Development of the Russian Federation, <http://www.economy.gov.ru/minec/activity/sections/ecosocsphere/departament/doc201001131124>

decreased mothers' mortality (by 12.3% from 2006 to 2008), and perinatal mortality (by 13.3%, down to 8.3 per 1000 live born).

However, the new schemes and the system of allowances connected to childhood and motherhood was still criticized. An independent analysis of the birth certificate scheme (Borozdina and Titaev, 2011), demonstrated that the main goals of the certificate introduction have not been achieved by 2011. The individualization of the medical services remained rare; the system of health centers for prenatal visits was still mainly financed according to the Soviet planning scheme. A double financial accounting, in order to fit both schemes, had become a widespread practice. Another scheme, the maternity capital, was mentioned as being "nothing but a way to support Russian pension system, because it is too small for other purposes" (Avdeeva, 2010, p 72). The voices of criticism were raised against a low effectiveness and difficulty of access to the allowances system, with the poorest, marginal or lonely parents mainly counting on its benefits. A share of children (0-16) receiving social allowances did not extend over slightly higher than 40% (Avdeeva, 2010, p 72). The places in pre-school facilities were still lacking. Revised payments compensating expenditures for the kindergartens (20% for the first child, 50% for the second, and 70% for the third child) were criticized as strengthening inequalities between families.

Gender discrimination as an indirect impact of the policies, was mentioned by some researchers. There is a further institutionalization of gender inequalities in the labor markets and in the domestic sphere, which may "continue to depress fertility rate of Russian women" (Avdeeva, 2011, p.3). Interestingly, a case of gender discrimination against men was confirmed at the edge of 2010-2011 by the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Konstantin Markin, "a military serviceman [who] was not entitled to the same parental leave as a military servicewoman would have had in his case"<sup>75</sup>.

By the completion of the Stage I of the implementation of the Concept of Demographic development until 2015, Rosstat reported<sup>76</sup> a gradually diminishing natural population decline; and in 2009 - first time since 1994 - a population increase of 10.5 thousand people (0.01%). The decisive role of migration in forming the surplus was not emphasized; amplification of migration was, however, one of the goals of the Stage I.

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<sup>75</sup> Blog commenting on developments in the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights, The special social role of women: the Strasbourg Court does not buy it (Konstantin Markin vs. Russia), October 14, 2010, by Alexandra Timmer [http://strasbourgobservers.com/2010/10/14/"the-special-social-role-of-women"-the-strasbourg-court-does-not-buy-it-konstantin-markin-v-russia/](http://strasbourgobservers.com/2010/10/14/)

<sup>76</sup> "Modern demographic situation in the Russian Federation" published on the website of Rosstat: URL: [http://www.gks.ru/free\\_doc/2010/demo/dem-sit-09.doc](http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/2010/demo/dem-sit-09.doc) Accessed on : 15.10.2014.

On the 01.01.2010, population of the Russian Federation accounted for 141.9 million people (just slightly lower than the lower bound of the target established by the Concept-2025). Unfortunately, net migration figures declined by 30% in 2010 and the population decline was registered again<sup>77</sup>. It was the first time since 2004, when a growth in the number of deaths was registered (20.5 thousands deaths more if comparing to year 2009). Over 2010, in 72 subjects of the Federation, a decrease of the number of births was observed.

### **3.5. 2011-2015: Program of demographic development until 2025, Stage II**

The plan<sup>78</sup> for the period 2011-2015, Stage II, targeted a decrease in the newborn mortality level (in particular, through further introduction of new centers of prenatal diagnostics); improvement of the maternity capital investment mechanism (including schemes of regional financing); construction of housing for young families in rural areas. The target total fertility rate per woman was fixed at 1.65-1.70 by 2015 (against 1.58 in 2011).

At the period start, several controversial measures – likely worsening conditions of women – were suggested for implementation. Three examples, that induced a wave of protests, included a change in the procedure for the calculation of the amount of allowance during pregnancy and child care leave until 1.5 years of the age of child, some amendments to the abortion regulation, and development of the system of juvenile justice.

In December 2010 and January 2011 a number of protests of pregnant women against the amendments to the Federal Law N 343 “Allowances for temporary disability, pregnancy and delivery under compulsory social insurance”<sup>79</sup> - that were supposed to get into the force on 01.01.2011 - took place in several big cities. The new procedure of the calculation of the monthly maternity benefit was supposed to change the base from the amount of the last salary (income during a year preceding the pregnancy, divided by either 365 or the number of actually worked days) to the net income gained during two calendar years preceding pregnancy (divided by 730). Such procedure was

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<sup>77</sup> Experts note that in 2010 net migration decreased by 30% declining down to 158 thousands. Demoscope Weekly, N 457-458, 7-20 March 2011, URL: <http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2011/0457/barom05.php>

<sup>78</sup> Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation N 367-p from 10.03.2011.

<sup>79</sup> *Ob obiazatel'nom sotsial'nom strakhovanii na sluchai vremennoi netrudosposobnosti i v sviazi s materinstvom*, Federal Law 343 adopted on 08.12.2010.

opposed as significantly reducing the amount of benefit due to periods (during the two years preceding pregnancy) of low income (that were widespread among women after the crisis of 2008-2009), periods of sick-lists, retention during pregnancy, and of vacations. As a governmental response to the active protests, a “special transition period” (01.01.2011 - 31.12.2012) was introduced, giving the possibility to choose which of the two procedures to use for the calculation of the allowance amount in case of each pregnant. The general procedure was supposed to be changed from 01.01.2013, when the calculation would be based only on the periods when a woman was actually working (and paying contributions to the Fund of Social Insurance)<sup>80</sup>.

With the aim of fertility growth stimulation, numerous attempts to introduce further obstacles for the abortion operation were discussed at the Russian Parliament<sup>81</sup>. Contemporarily, several funds such as Fund of socio-cultural initiatives (*Fond sotsial'no-kul'turnykh initsiativ*)<sup>82</sup>, promoted anti-abortion initiatives. Among all, two can be noted: a yearly information week “Give me a gift of life!” (*Podari mne zhizn'!*) in July and “The day of family, love, and fidelity”<sup>83</sup> celebrated on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July, starting from 2008. The Fund promoted pre-abortion obligatory consultations and distributed leaflets presenting the consequences of abortion sometimes in an exaggeratedly negative way. However, the Fund also accompanies pre-abortion consultations with some schemes of material help to women who abandoned their decision to abort, e.g. shelters for pregnant women who have no place to stay at. Another initiative of the Fund, though not yet covered the whole Russia territory, is a program of promotion of safeguard of female reproductive health “White rose” (*Belaia roza*). In framework of the program, several centers of diagnostics and prevention of oncological diseases in reproductive sphere were created in St. Petersburg, Arkhangelsk and several other cities<sup>84</sup>.

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<sup>80</sup> Marina Rabzhaeva “*Beremennym okazalos' proshche naiti drug druga*”, 01.03.2011, Sensus Novus, <http://sensusnovus.ru/opinion/2011/03/01/5788.html>; “*Dektetnye posobiia: perezagruzka*”, RIA News, 01.02.2011: <http://ria.ru/analytics/20110201/329043292.html>; RIA News 18.01.2011 “Russian women protest against new maternity benefits payment system”: <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20110118/162191854.html> <http://russiaprofile.org/politics/a1294773645.html>; Svetlana Kononova, Russia Profile, 11.01.2011 “Bump and protest”.

<sup>81</sup> See for example, Demoscope weekly, N477-478 12-25.09.2011, URL: [demoscope.ru/weekly/2011.0477/gazeta02.php](http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2011.0477/gazeta02.php)

<sup>82</sup> See the website of the Fund at URL: <http://www.fondsci.ru/>

<sup>83</sup> Promoted by Svetlana Medvedeva, wife of President Dmitry Medvedev, a local day of Saints Petr and Fevroniia. URL: <http://densemyi.ru/>

<sup>84</sup> See the official site of the program: <http://www.fondsci.ru/projects/social/356/>

In July 2011 President Dmitri Medvedev had signed into law some additional to those introduced in 2004 - restrictions for legality of abortions at late months of pregnancy. An initiative group “Fight with abortions, not with women”<sup>85</sup> stepped forward against the new measures. The latter included, among all, proliferation to the whole territory of Russia – of the pilot project implemented in Krasnoyarsk Area and Volgograd Oblast in 2006-2007 - of the obligatory consultations with a psychologist in case when abortion is requested. The consultations aim was to convince women (even in an aggressive manner) to give birth to the child. As the activists of the initiative group note, during the consultations mainly the possible complication of abortion were highlighted, as well as developing sense of guilt among those who didn’t want to abandon the idea of abortion<sup>86</sup>. The problem of contraception was out of the scope of such consultations. The new amendments to the Law included a time gap between a request for abortion and the operation performance: at least 48 hours for the terms of pregnancy of 4-7 and 11-12 weeks, and of at least seven days – the so-called “week of silence” - for the term of pregnancy of 8-10 weeks. For the later terms of pregnancy from 12 to 22 weeks, three of four social reasons were removed, namely 1-2 group of invalidity of father, death of father during pregnancy, being in prison during pregnancy. Only rape as the reason for pregnancy was left among the social reasons for late term abortion<sup>87</sup>.

Among the additional measures that were proposed but not passed into the law, there was a necessity of a signature of husband on his agreement for the abortion to be done.

The amendment was criticized, for example, for the delay of abortion period. The measure that was likely to increase a risk of complications during the abortion and to have an even more negative effect on the reproductive health of women undergoing the operation. Moreover, there was a clear difficulty in meeting the obligation of several medical visits – due to their high time and money costs - especially in rural areas. The latter might lead to an increase in the number of illegal abortions. Other critiques mentioned the absence of a program of material support of women who changed their decision, underdevelopment of the system of information and consultations on

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<sup>85</sup> Site of the initiative group “Fight against abortions, not against women” <http://sites.google.com/site/protivabortov2011/>

<sup>86</sup> Methodical recommendations N15-0/10/2-9162; The text of the methodical recommendations for a psychologist can be found at <http://kfcnsr.ru/images/stories/Documents/metod-rec.pdf>

<sup>87</sup> *Ob osnovakh okhrany zdorov'ia grazhdan v Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, Federal Law N 323 from 21.11.2011. See also *O sotsial'nom pokazanii dlia iskusstvennogo preryvaniia beremennosti*, Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation N 98 from 06.12.2012.

prevention of pregnancy and contraception, and lacking substitution of chirurgic aborts by its medicament (and vacuum) analogs recommended by the World Health Organization (the latter - only 29% of aborts in Russia in 2009).

While the Federal Target Program “Children of Russia” supervised by the government was completed in 2010, a call for development of the new paradigm in the sphere of childhood was announced by the Foresight Project “Childhood 2030”<sup>88</sup>. Among the main goals of the project there is a refreshment of the ideas and priorities of the Russian society as related to childhood, parenthood, and production of childcare and related goods. Children are considered the main subject of investments (the only project that will bring secure profit in the future). The program put a strong emphasize on the new technologies. So-called “life trajectories” should be developed for children, and social services should tackle the problems when parents are “unable” to contribute to enable following the trajectories. This is why the project created a wave of disagreement as being distant from reality and for its close connection to the fast developing system of juvenile justice. While the goals of the juvenile justice system introduction cover defense of the institute of family, measures against aggression against children, and defense of the rights of children, it is more and more often, that these targets are considered being very ambiguous. Voices of criticism arise, warning that in absence of the strict criteria, practically, every person can be blamed and potentially manipulated with children used as a “threat”<sup>89</sup>. On the 22.12.2010, a public forum reunited more than 3000 people from the whole Russia, and as the result, a petition was submitted to the President.

One more program was launched in 2011 without much success of its implementation over the three followed years. It was related to granting free plots to large families in order to enable them to build their own housing. In order to be eligible, a family should have had at least three minor children, the whole family members being citizens of the Russian Federation; family was supposed to had lived at least five years in the area where the request for the land plot was placed<sup>90</sup>. Contemporary with this program, a number of regional initiatives was undertaken in order to promote the birth of the second and third children. Popova (2014) mention, among others, the introduction of

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<sup>88</sup> See the official site of the project: <http://www.2010-2030.ru/> Initiated in April 2008 by the Charity Foundation My generation (*Moe pokolenie*) <http://www.moe-pokolenie.ru/>

<sup>89</sup> E.g. Alexander Privalov, War with the last ally (*Vojna s poslednim sojuznikom*) Expert, N2, 17.01.2011 <http://expert.ru/expert/2011/02/vojna-s-poslednim-soyuznikom/>

<sup>90</sup> On 16.06.2011, President Medvedev signed an amendment to the Federal Law N 161 “*O sodeistvii razvitiuu zhilishnogo stroitel'stva*” from 24.07.2008. The Law gave to the regional administrations the right to decide on the size and location of the land plots that could be allocated to large families.

regional parental capital in Republic of Komi in July 2011.

In order to further improve health of the population, deputy Mohomed Selimkhanov proposed to Duma on September 2015 (09.10.2015), a project of a law requesting a HIV/AIDS absence certificate for those who want to get married. Such law is already implemented in the Chechen Republic since 2011.

By the beginning of 2016, it was planned to stabilize the population figures at 142-143 million people, to reach average life expectancy at birth of 70 years, to increase the TRF by 30% in comparison to 2006 (thus planned an increase of TRF from 1.305 until 1.7), and to improve by 30% the indicators of mortality.

According to Rosstat, on the 01.09.2015, the population of the Russian Federation accounted for 146.4 million people<sup>91</sup>. However, unlike in 2014, when population was growing due to the number of births exceeding the number of deaths, a natural population decrease of 11.7 thousand people was observed during the first eight months of 2015; the decrease was compensated by the migration figures. Similar dynamics is reflected in the population dynamics forecast on the site of the Rosstat<sup>92</sup>. According to the low version of the forecast, the natural decrease of 49.2 thousand people can be expected in 2016. The average version of the forecast places a decrease figure of 42.6 at the year 2018. While the TRF of 1.75 - exceeding the target of 1.7 - was reached by 2014, the future forecasts predict a further decrease of the coefficient, among all due to decreasing number of women in fertile age. The target of mortality decrease was not met. However, the life expectancy exceeded the goal of 70 years and it is predicted to increase further for both men and women.

#### ***4. Concluding remarks***

After 1917, the images of the new Soviet man and woman were build: woman as worker, activist, mother and care-giver, and man as worker and defender of the

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<sup>91</sup> Demographic situation on the 01.09.2015. Rosstat. URL: [http://www.gks.ru/bgd/free/b15\\_00/IssWWW.exe/Stg/dk09/8-0.doc](http://www.gks.ru/bgd/free/b15_00/IssWWW.exe/Stg/dk09/8-0.doc) Accessed 11.11.2015

<sup>92</sup> Demographic forecast for Russia until 2030. Rosstat. [http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat\\_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/population/demography/#](http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/population/demography/#) Accessed on 11.11.2015. Last available version of 06.02.2015.



Motherland. It is important that the reproductive function of women always stayed in the focus of the Soviet population policies due to a persistent lack of human resources needed for military and/or labor mobilization at different period of Soviet history.

Contemporaneously with the active participation of women in working sphere, image of a large family as normality was repeatedly promoted starting from the 1930s as well as the women's predestination as mothers. The list of benefits to families with children and measures aimed at reconciliation of working and family life was repeatedly updated; lack of region-specific differentiation of policies and of the measures promoting safeguard of reproductive health remained among the main weaknesses of the period.

The modern Russia inherited from the Soviet Union a toolbox of the family and fertility policies. Evident depopulation process started right after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. However, it has been attracting a serious attention of politicians since 2006 only, when the course on the active fertility stimulation was announced. Starting from 2007, directions of the Demographic Concept for Development of Russia until 2025 are followed. In 2015, right at the end of the second stage of the Concept implementation the official sources report on the main goals of the stage being achieved. It is, however, too early for announcement of the end of the depopulation process.

It was already at the beginning of the first stage of the implementation of the Concept-2025, when Russian and international experts were pointing out the favourable conditions for a possibility of the fertility increase in view of the ridge of a demographic wave bringing to the most fertile age a numerous cohort of women born in the 1980s. Thus current achievements may become only a short-term success due to a currently favorable age structure of the population. Further decrease of a number of women in fertile age is to be expected. Maternity capital scheme, though seen as successful, is unlikely to be extended for a long-term period – though a two-year extension of the program was preannounced by President Putin in December 2015 - as being rather burdensome for the state budget.

Other weak points which may contribute to the further decrease of fertility are multiple. The system of allowances and benefits is often criticized as targeting mainly poor. Economically active working women, from one side are welcomed in the labor market as helping to support the aging population. From other side, the nature of labor relations between women and employers is such that women, especially those with children, are discriminated against as being a relatively more expensive labor force than men due to a number of non-monetary benefits connected with the status of

mothers. As childbirths are postponed, partially due to career reasons, an average age at the first births continues to increase. This makes some of the women non eligible for the benefits targeting young families. In addition, the contraception culture is still low; the programs of the safeguard of the reproductive health are scarce. Importantly, a high reliance of population on the state support and stimulation may be responsible for a lack of responsibility for their own fertility and health-related decisions. All these interdependent factors may lead to inability to realize fertility intentions in full.

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