Preface

This book, *Gender and Generational Division in EU Citizenship*, is part of the book series ‘Interdisciplinary Perspectives on European Citizenship’ of the multidisciplinary bEUcitizen research programme. The bEUcitizen programme set out to identify and analyse what are the implications of EU citizenship, which impediments hinder European citizens from realizing their rights, and how. A research grant by the European Commission enabled a consortium, comprising 26 universities and institutes from 19 countries in and outside Europe, to study this question during a four-year period (2013 to 2017).

The bEUcitizen research was carried out against the background of growing challenges for the EU, such as the economic and financial crisis, widening inequality, the rise of populism, widespread contestation of the European project and Euroscepticism, challenges to open borders and mobility, and the Brexit referendum. Whereas the situation the EU finds itself in is serious, it may not necessarily be desperate. The ‘end of the growth of European integration’ may, paraphrasing the words of T.S. Elliot, also be the beginning, that is, the beginning of new forms of integration, as, for instance, set out in the Commission’s *White Paper on the Future of Europe* (2017), or the beginning of the development of a more mature concept of citizenship, or of alternative forms of EU citizenship.

These developments make this book, *Gender and Generational Division in EU Citizenship*, even more relevant. The book is structured along the lines of the bEUcitizen research on gender and generations, with a special focus on the extent to which EU citizenship is different for women and men, for the young and the old, for those who stay in their own country and for those who move within the European Union. It covers diverse aspects of EU citizenship, ranging from the political citizenship of young Europeans, the civil and social rights of migrant care workers, reproductive rights and variations in family law among Member States, to EU gender politics and policies. What can be signalled is a remarkable and paradoxical tendency towards expanding the right to family life, exemplified, on the one hand, by recognition of family diversity by the European Court for Human Rights and EU law, which have more recently substantially reduced the autonomy of national jurisdiction in not granting the right to family life to

‘other’ types of family forms, and, on the other hand, the current process of increasing family dependency (refamilialization) because of limited social citizenship rights for non-wage workers. Because most EU policies have been implemented only via ‘soft law’ – the open method of coordination (OMC) and benchmarking, which are not free from ambiguities or tensions – they are sensitive to national political agendas. More than any other social dispute they seem to be very much influenced by national and cultural and institutional path dependency, and therefore form a barrier to equalizing the status of all European citizens by EU policy.

The missing link between EU’s gender equality agenda and practices in EU Member States obviously came to the fore during the recent Great Recession (GR), the financial and economic crisis, resulting in austerity politics with severe consequences for newcomers on the labour market (the young), female workers in public services, and dependent elderly people (mainly women). Throughout Europe, the retrenchment of welfare states has occasioned high levels of what can be called the ‘in-betweens’ – those whose social status is in between a dependent family member and a full worker – unemployed young people, women and dependent elderly persons for whom intergenerational and gender dependencies reoccur due to austerity policies. Obviously, the EU has had problems in finding an adequate response, resulting in refamilialization.

In parallel, the EU has to some extent safeguarded specific family rights that extend beyond the definition of the traditional family via recognition of real, existent family relations with a child instead of only those that are regulated by (national) law, and recognized family members’ mobility within the EU. However, due to a lack of homogeneity of family-related rights in Member States, the four freedoms of the European market (the free movement of goods, capital, services and labour) are compromised because diverse family forms are not recognized and care-related social rights are minimal. The downside of this broadening of the definition of family relations is the increasing family dependence of unemployed partners, young adults and elderly people who have lost the protection of national welfare states. While during the past decades the legal definition of the family unit has been stretched, at the same time its caring and protective function has been expanded; the family has again become a last resort for dependent members.

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Trudie Knijn and Manuela Naldini