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### *Summary*

### **Preface to the Rostock Debate on Demographic Change**

**Laura Bernardi**

**Pascal Hetze**

This publication is part of the Special Collection “Rostock debate on demographic change”, organized by Guest Editor Laura Bernardi.

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Preface

## Preface to the Rostock Debate on Demographic Change

**Laura Bernardi<sup>1</sup>**

**Pascal Hetze<sup>2</sup>**

### Abstract

The first Rostock Debate on Demographic Change, which took place on February 21, 2006, centered on the following question: Should governments in Europe push much more aggressively for gender equality to raise fertility? The four debaters were Laurent Toulemon from the Institut National d'Etudes Demographiques (France), Dimiter Philipov from the Vienna Institute of Demography (Austria), Livia Oláh from Stockholm University (Sweden), and Gerda Neyer from the Max Planck Institute (Germany).

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## Preface

On February 21, 2006, the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research hosted the first Rostock Debate on Demographic Change, which was organized in collaboration with the Rostocker Zentrum zur Erforschung des Demografischen Wandels (Rostock Center for the Study of Demographic Change). Four renowned demographers, Laurent Toulemon from the Institut National des Études Démographiques (France), Livia Olah from Stockholm University (Sweden), Gerda Neyer from the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research (Germany), and Dimiter Philipov from the Vienna Institute of Demography (Austria) acted as speakers, and addressed the following question: *Should governments in Europe push much more aggressively for gender equality to raise fertility?* The relationship between the level of gender equality and the fertility level of a population has been frequently debated. Very low levels of fertility seem to characterize societies in which gender inequality in the private sphere of family and care relationships persists, and is inconsistent with the level of gender equality in the public sphere of education and employment. According to some researchers, this inconsistency leads women to limit fertility in order to relax the tension of conflicting roles. The panelists were asked to reflect on issues like the following: Are policies aimed at altering a couple’s fertility preferences acceptable? If so, are these policies likely to be successful in altering gender inequality? Which policies are likely to be successful and why?

The panelists were asked to answer the major debate question unambiguously, in the affirmative or in the negative, in order to stimulate a lively debate and allow for an open discussion of divergent opinions. For this reason, the arguments are expressed in a less nuanced way that they would be in a scientific paper. At the end of the debate, the audience had the chance to take active part in the discussion by taking a clear stance for one or the other position.

The debate was videotaped and the panelists were asked to produce a written text which reflects the arguments they expressed during the debate. The online documentation of the event and the related written documents were created to make the debate available to a broader audience, and for teaching purposes.

More broadly, the aim of the Rostock Debate Series is to challenge social scientists to take a stand on policy-relevant controversies related to demographic change. This initiative complements standard scientific talks by allowing for a lively and wide-ranging exchange of arguments.

The organizers  
Laura Bernardi and Pascal Hetze

**Rostocker Zentrum**  
zur Erforschung des Demografischen Wandels



**21 February 2006, 18:15 – 19:30**

## **Rostock Debate on Demographic Change**

### **"Should Governments in Europe Push Much More Aggressively for Gender Equality to Raise Fertility?"**

**Johann Peter Süßmilch Auditorium,  
Max-Planck-Institut für demografische Forschung,  
Konrad-Zuse Straße 1, 18057 Rostock**

**Organizers: Laura Bernardi (MPIDR) and Pascal Hetze (RZ)**

#### **Arguing for the YES:**

**Laurent Toulemon**  
Institut national d'études démographiques, France

**Livia Olah**  
Stockholm University, Sweden

#### **Arguing for the NO:**

**Gerda Neyer**  
Max-Planck Institute for Demographic Research, Germany

**Dimitar Philipov**  
Vienna Institute of Demography, Austria



Das Rostocker Zentrum ist eine gemeinsame Einrichtung des Max-Planck-Instituts für demografische Forschung und der Universität Rostock



