

## **Reconstructing and Reimagining the Family:**

### **Health sciences and welfare on families in Southeastern Europe (1945-1989)**

Athens, École Française d'Athènes

September 8, 2023

Organisers: École Française d'Athènes (EFA) //École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) // Centre de Recherche Médecine, Sciences, Santé, Santé Mentale, Société (CERMES3)// COST Action “Who Cares in Europe”// Modern Greek History Research Centre, Academy of Athens// The Greek Network for the History of Health

At the end of the Second World War families all over Europe faced harsh realities: missing, killed, and injured members, loss of home and recourses, dislocation and separation. At the same time, “the family” was recognized as “the natural and fundamental group unit of society [...] entitled to protection by society and the State”.<sup>1</sup> It was placed at the foreground of a series of discourses and practices aiming at reconstructing Europe, and at guarantying its economic, political and social stability and progress. In a nutshell, the rebuilding and development of post-war societies went through the rebuilding of families, which was often envisioned as reform or even as “modernization” of the family. Subsequently, over the course of the second half of the twentieth century, political, economic and cultural changes had varied and profound effects on families and the notion of “the family”. These developments can be fruitfully explored from the perspective of health sciences and welfare interventions.

The workshop aspires to enrich and nuance our understanding of post-war visions of and approaches to the family through an original geographical and analytical lens. On the one hand, it will chart new research on the countries of the post-war Southeastern Europe (Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Romania and Turkey), which are understudied in comparison to Western European countries, and which are rarely examined together, owing to their different political

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<sup>1</sup> *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Article 16, 1946, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

systems and social policies. On the other hand, through the concept of health, a notion that was broadened in the post-war period to encompass not only the physical and mental, but also the social, the workshop embarks on a combined exploration of medical and social sciences, along with welfare professions, in shaping discourses and undertaking action on families.<sup>2</sup>

More specifically, we are interested in the following research questions:

-Which medical sciences were claiming expertise on the family after the Second World War? Did they include specialties beyond pediatrics, obstetrics-gynecology, psychiatry and child psychiatry? Which ones were newcomers and which had been already established during the interwar period? Did their approaches change in the course of the twentieth century?

- To what extent welfare agents and workers (experts and volunteers) cooperated with health scientists and/or adopted and furthered discourses and practices on health in their work with families? Can we discern a trend of “psychosocial welfare”, namely an approach binding social welfare with interventions on relationships within the family and, more specifically, on mental and emotional health? Did the “psy” become central in understanding and working with families, as it has been argued for countries of Western Europe?

- What was the role of professionals, such as nurses, social workers and therapists, but also of social scientists, in the health schemes around families? Special emphasis is placed on social work, which although not a science, drew heavily on sciences, both the social (mainly sociology) and the “psy” sciences (psychiatry, psychology and psychoanalysis), thus proving a useful case study at the intersection among health and the social.

-Which family health approaches were officially recognized and more widely disseminated? Were there critiques and resistances to formal and mainstream attempts of family normalization and reshaping, for example by alternative family models, youth cultures, or the movements of the late 1960s?

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<sup>2</sup> The much-quoted definition of the World Health Organization of health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” comes from the 1946 *Constitution of the World Health Organization*, p. 1, <https://apps.who.int/gb/bd/PDF/bd47/EN/constitution-en.pdf?ua=1>.

-How were family health interventions linked with political developments? How did political regimes, and their changes, affect the reconstruction and reimagining of the postwar family? What were the professionals' positions towards political developments? For instance, did they try to have an impact on them, or take advantage of them in order to trigger change within their own professional field? What sort of coalitions did they try to create with political actors?

By investigating new and old understandings, continuities and ruptures in family interventions through the concept of health, the workshop ultimately aims at providing insights into how “the family” has been defined, represented and reinvented in different social and political contexts in Southeastern Europe during the post-war period.

The workshop is organized within the convention between the École Française d' Athènes (<https://www.efa.gr/en/>) and the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (<https://www.ehess.fr/fr/europe>) and is supported by the COST Action “Who Cares in Europe” (<https://whocaresineurope.eu/>). It aims at fostering the scientific partnership between France, Greece, and Europe, and at connecting researchers working on different fields and countries that are not usually in dialogue with each other.

Funding opportunities will be provided for a limited number of participants from the EHESS or members of the COST Action “Who Cares in Europe”. In addition, there will be the option of online participation, as the workshop will be hosted in a hybrid format.

Please address your queries and send your proposal (300-word abstract, along with and a one-page cv) to Despo Kritsotaki ([despo.kritsotaki@gmail.com](mailto:despo.kritsotaki@gmail.com)) and Nicolas Henckes ([nicolas.henckes@cnrs.fr](mailto:nicolas.henckes@cnrs.fr)).

Submission of proposals by 4/6/2023.

Notification of acceptance: 19/6/2023.