

<b>QUESTION MODULE DESIGN TEAM (ESS ROUND 3) APPLICATION FORM</b>	
Please return this form by post,  or email or fax to:	Rory Fitzgerald, Centre for Comparative Social Surveys School of Social Sciences New Social Sciences Building (DG32) City University Northampton Square London EC1V 0HB  <a href="mailto:ess@city.ac.uk">ess@city.ac.uk</a> Fax: +44 (0) 207 040 4903
<b>CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS: 1<sup>st</sup> March 2005, 17.00 HOURS (CET)</b>	

**1. Principal Applicant (person to whom all correspondence will be sent):**

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### **3. Proposed title of module:**

**The Timing of Life: The Organisation of the Life Course in Europe**

### **4. Abstract**

This proposal is based on the theoretical framework of the life course approach. The principal emphasis is on the so-far under-researched comparative cultural analysis of life course. The module aims at furthering our understanding of the views of European citizens on the organisation of the life course and of their strategies to influence and plan their own lives. Three main research topics concerning the organisation of the life course are studied in the set of proposed questions: 1) to what extent do citizens perceive the life course as a structured sequence of life stages, and which events mark the transition from one stage to the other?; 2) do social norms concerning the life course exist, and if so, to what extent are these norms backed by sanctions?; 3) what are the expectations and capacities of citizens concerning life course planning? Based on life course theory, we expect that the three questions have heterogeneous answers between societies with different cultures and institutional settings, and that there is an important intra-societal variation too, which makes the ESS a fundamental vehicle for this module. Besides its primary scientific relevance, the proposed topics relate to recent public debates about the (re-)structuring of welfare states.

### **5. Curriculum vitae**

#### **Principal Applicant: Francesco C. Billari**

Professor Billari, a social and statistical demographer, is currently affiliated with Institute of Quantitative Methods, Bocconi University, and Fellow of the Innocenzo Gasparini Institute for Economic Research (IGIER). At Bocconi, he is Director of the Graduate Degree in Economic and Social Sciences. He is Secretary-General/Treasurer of EAPS (European Association for Population Studies). After studying Economics and Statistics, Billari obtained a Ph.D. in Demography from a consortium of Italian Universities (Padua, Florence, Rome). He has been a Doctoral Fellow at the Center for Sociology and the Study of the Life Course at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin. Between 1999 and 2002, he has been Head of the Research Group on the Demography of Early Adulthood at the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, Rostock (Germany) He is currently Associate Editor of "Demographic Research".

Some of his international collaborative experiences: Generation and Gender Programme (GGP) (co-author of background papers and questionnaire development); EAPS Working Group on the Second Demographic Transition in Europe (co-chair, with Liefbroer); Scientific Panel on Transitions to Adulthood in Developed Countries of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (member); Survey on Social Capital and Coping Strategies in Bulgaria (funded by Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research); Internationally Comparable Surveys on Sexual Behaviour and Affectivity of University Students (coordinator of researchers in 9 countries, funded by Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research); EU FP6 project POLYMOD (2004-2008: responsible for social science input in public health modelling). As a consultant, he has written background papers for the European Population Forum 2004; for the European Population Conference 2005, organised by the Council of Europe; for the 7<sup>th</sup> German Family Report. He has collaborated with Liefbroer as co-chair of the EAPS working group, as vice-chair of an ESF EURESCO conference, and on papers in a joint research project on social norms in life course research. He has collaborated with Spéder in the GGP; they have both co-authored two papers on life course during the time of transformation. He is one of the authors (with Hagestad) of the background book for the GGP. His main research interests are the transition to adulthood, family dynamics, fertility, comparative research, life course analysis and research methods. He has published on the most important international journals in demography, and some of related fields.

**Curriculum vitae (continued):****Co-applicant 1: Gunhild O. Hagestad**

A sociologist, professor Hagestad is educated in Norway and the US. She has held faculty positions at the University of Minnesota, the University of Chicago, Pennsylvania State University, Northwestern University and the University of Oslo. Currently, she is Professor of Sociology at Agder University College in Kristiansand, Norway, and Senior Researcher at NOVA (Norwegian Social Research) in Oslo. Her main research interests are intergenerational relations and life course patterns in aging societies. She is currently analyzing survey data from the Norwegian study of life course, aging and generations, for which she has been a senior adviser. Another survey directed by Hagestad, on grandparents and children, is now going into the field.

Some of her international collaborative experiences: Social Science Research Council working group on collaborative research with Japan (focused on generational and life course research), 1981-84; International advisory board for Longitudinal Aging Study Amsterdam, 1991-; Organizer and faculty member, International Summer School on The Life Course and Social Policy, University of Bremen, 1992; Expert Group on Research Agenda for the UN International Year of Older Persons, 1999; Consultant (prepared background paper and commented on questionnaire) for the UN/ECE/Population Activities Unit, Generations and Gender Programme, 2000, 2002; International advisory board, Netherlands Kinship Panel Study, 2001-; Team leader, EU Research Training Network focused on grandparenthood, 2002-2006. Some of these experiences involve other applicants (Billari and Spéder for the Generations and Gender Programme; Liefbroer for the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study).

A major contributor to the development of the life course approach, Hagestad has extensively published on the life course, including age norms, ageing and age segregation.

**Co-applicant 2: Aart C. Liefbroer**

Aart C. Liefbroer is a sociologist, who received his Ph.D. from the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. Currently, he is Head of the Department of Social Demography at the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute in The Hague, and holds a Professorship in Demography of Young Adulthood at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. His main research interests all relate to (changes in) the life course, particularly among young adults. He has studied historical changes in the transition to adulthood, the impact of parental background, values and norms on life course decisions, cross-national differences in the transition to adulthood, the interplay between life-course events in different life-domains, and the consequences of transitions for well-being. He has been (and is) involved in a number of large-scale data-collection efforts in the Netherlands. These include: (i) the Panel Study of Social Integration in the Netherlands (N=1775; five waves among young adults between 1987 and 1999); (ii) the NESTOR-programme Living Arrangements and Social Networks of Older Adults (N=4500; a survey among adults of 55+, conducted in 1992); (iii) the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (N=10000; two waves; first wave in 2002/2003, second wave currently in planning stage); (iv) Population Policy Acceptance survey (N=1500; trend survey with tri-annual waves), and (v) the Youth and Culture survey (N=3800; panel survey among adolescents and their parents, recontacted bi-annually). Together with Billari, he is joint-chair of the Working Group on the Second Demographic Transition of the European Association of Population Studies. They have organised a series of conferences on the topic of the Second Demographic Transition, sponsored by the ESF. He has also collaborated with Billari in designing a module on age and sequencing norms that was included in the Dutch PPA survey of 2000, and on papers that study demographic norms and their impact of demographic behaviour.

## Curriculum vitae (continued)

### Co-applicant 3: Zsolt Spéder

A sociologist, Zsolt Spéder is educated in Hungary (Budapest University of Economics) and Germany (J.W. Goethe University), and holds a Ph.D. in Social Sciences. He is currently the director of the Director of the Demographic Research Institute, at the Hungarian Central Statistical Office and an Associate professor at the Budapest University of Economic Sciences and Public Administration (Economic Policy Department); he is member of the Editorial Board of "International Sociology". His primary fields of research are poverty and inequalities, labour market and fertility, status changes in the life course, family formation, the elderly, longitudinal panel research methods. He is currently directing a large-scale panel survey in Hungary ("Turning Points in the Life Course"), and he is co-ordinator of the Questionnaire Development Group for Wave 2 of the Generations and Gender Survey.

Some of his international collaborative experiences: Tempus Project on Curricula on "Social Stratification" and "Family and households", 3 European universities, 1992-94 (EU funded); Panel Comparability Project (on the ongoing European panel surveys), Luxembourg, CEPS 1995-1998; "Economic well-being of the Elderly", 5 country comparison, 1996-1999, funded by PHARE-ACE; CHER (Consortium of Household Panels for European Socio-economic Research) 1999- (EU funded); "Toward a New European System of Social Indicators", coordinated by ZUMA, Mannheim, 7 Institutes and countries, 1998-2001 (EU funded); Network for Integrated European Population Studies (NIEPS), 9 European Institutes, 2000-2003, (EU funded); "Generation and Gender Programme" Research Consortium of 7 European Population Institutes, 2000- (country-funded); "DIALOG- Population Policy Acceptance Study – The Viewpoint of Citizens and Policy Actors Regarding the Management of Population Related Change". He has collaborated with Billari in the Generations and Gender Programme; they have both co-authored two papers on life course during the time of transformation.

Spéder has extensively published on issues such as social transformation and European Union enlargement, poverty and inequality, and economic well-being of the elderly.

### 6. Theory behind proposed module:

The proposed ESS module aims at studying the organisation of the life course in Europe. More specifically, using the *life course approach* as the background theoretical framework, the module aims at studying attitudes, perceptions and behaviour concerning the timing of lives. International comparison is crucial because the organisation of the life course differs between countries, depending on long-standing cultural factors and on institutional settings, both of which are country-specific (and sometimes even specific to sub-national *milieus*). The role of Europe as "natural laboratory" for its diversity can be exploited to this purpose, and this idea is at the origin of the ESS itself (ESF, 1999). At the same time, a strong intra-societal variation in the organisation of the life course is expected: individuals in different social strata, with different value orientations, political attitudes and/or levels of religiousness, will have different views and experiences concerning the timing of life.

In the theoretical framework of our proposal, we first recall the life course approach and the need for a comparative cultural analysis of life courses. Next, we illustrate the principal aim of the proposal, i.e. to further our understanding of the views of European citizens on the organisation of the life course and their strategies to influence and plan their own lives. Finally, we argue for the importance of including the module in the context of the ESS and on the scientific and policy relevance of the topic.

### Background: The life course as an emerging topic in social science research

The life course approach is an interdisciplinary program of study that has been under development since the mid-1970s. In their end-of-millennium review on methods of life course research, Giele and Elder (1998) identify the fundamental elements that shape individual lives and are crucial to the analysis of life courses. These elements are: individual development; history and culture (location in time and place); and social relations (linked

lives). They intersect and interact to shape the key subject of life course research: the *timing of lives*. Individual development, sometimes simply represented by *age*, refers to the trajectory of an individual through life; past events and experience cumulate in shaping what can be broadly defined as human development. History and culture, sometimes simply represented by *period (and place)*, refer to the importance of the macro-level context in which lives are lived; this includes the institutional setting of a society, i.e. the *welfare regime* (Esping-Andersen, 1990, 1999), as well as the long-standing cultural roots that mark the differences between societies (e.g. the family system). Social relations refer to the context of relationships in which individuals are embedded; *cohort* has been a traditional variable used to study the collective life experiences of age peers, but this set of factors also refers to the importance of the network of relevant others whose life courses are intertwined (kin, friends and peers, partners, colleagues), as well as to meso-level institutional settings (e.g. firms, schools) that contribute to shaping the life course. These dimensions have to be considered as interacting with each other: for instance, as Elder (1998, pp. 951-952) notes, “The life course is age-graded through institutions and social structures, and it is embedded in relationships that constrain and support behavior – Both the individual life course and a person’s developmental trajectory are interconnected with the lives and development of others”.

Theories on the (dynamic) structure of the life course in modern societies emphasise that changes in the way life courses are organised originate mainly from two societal processes: *institutionalisation* and *individualisation*. Concerning the *institutionalisation* of the life course (Kohli, 1985), the idea is that the timing of lives is increasingly being influenced by opportunities and constraints created by the State and markets interacting with the State (e.g. Mayer and Müller, 1986; Mayer and Schoepflin, 1989). In particular, the labour market and the housing market play a crucial role. The housing market organises both access to housing (e.g. during young adulthood) and mobility during the life course. Labour market regulations (including those related to retirement) define the entry into the labour market, the general structure of employment careers, as well as the exit from the labour career. The concept of the *individualisation* of the life course refers to the idea that the organisation of the life course is increasingly less subject to norms and expectations from institutions that constitute agents of normative pressure, like the family and the Church, and is more susceptible to individual choice (e.g. Buchmann, 1989). This idea of increased individual choice is also propounded by scholars who suggest that the new era of choice results from a “Second Demographic Transition” (e.g. van de Kaa, 1987; Lesthaeghe, 1995), or heralds the era of “Second Modernity” (e.g. Beck, 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). A choice biography is thought to have replaced the standard biography, although some scholars argue that the weakening of external constraints on the timing of lives calls for a stronger role of internal guidelines and calendars (Heckhausen, 1999).

The two key concepts mentioned, i.e. institutionalisation and individualisation of the life course, potentially stand in a rather tense relationships to each other, especially with regard to their empirical operationalisation. On the one hand, institutionalisation is thought to imply a standardisation of the life course, and a decrease in the opportunities of citizens to shape their own life course. On the other hand, individualisation is thought to imply an increase in such opportunities, resulting in greater variability and a de-standardisation of the life course. However, we prefer to view the concepts of institutionalisation and individualisation as complementary, in the sense that each of them focuses on particular aspects of social reality. One could argue that an institutionalisation perspective focuses on the actual occurrence and sequencing of life course trajectories and tries to understand to what extent these trajectories are “organised” by the State and by institutional arrangements in general. It also pays attention to actual changes in laws and policies, such as age proscriptions and prescriptions (e.g. mandatory retirement, employment of youth) Thus, its principal focus is on a *structural analysis* of life courses, studying the life course “as observed”. Individualisation focuses on the perceptions of individuals about the timing of life, and this perspective tries to understand how individuals perceive their options and how they plan their own future life course. Thus, its focus is on a *cultural analysis* of life courses, studying the life course “as experienced”.

## **Principal aim of the proposal**

To understand the way life courses are organised in modern society, both structural and cultural analyses of life courses are necessary. However, in terms of research attention, there has been a clear unbalance between both types of analysis. Recent decades have witnessed a marked increase in studies that focus on the structural analysis of life courses. This includes research comparing European countries. For instance, comparative studies have been conducted on changes in the timing and sequencing of the transitions to adulthood (e.g. Billari et al., 2001; Corijn and Klijzing, 2001), on the interplay between events in the educational and occupational life domain and in the family life domain (e.g. Blossfeld, 1995; Liefbroer and Corijn, 1999; Billari and Philipov, 2004), on the “coupled careers” of partners (e.g. Blossfeld and Drobnic, 2003), on the end of occupational trajectories and retirement (e.g. Kohli et al., 1991). These studies have profited from two developments connected to survey research on the life course. First, there has been a sharp increase in the number of surveys that include retrospective information on respondents’ life histories, together with panel studies containing similar information. Second, the development of statistical techniques and user-friendly packages has contributed to the establishment of *life course analysis* as a field (Billari, 2003). Nevertheless, during the same period, the cultural analysis of life courses has been relatively neglected, and particularly so in an international comparative perspective. The number of surveys that include information on the perceptions and norms of citizens with regard to the organisation of the life course and on the ways in which people plan their own life courses are few and far between, the main exception being studies on childbearing norms (see e.g. Fahey and Spéder, 2004). Given this lack of data and studies, the *principal* aim of this proposal is to further our understanding of the views of European citizens on the organisation of the life course and their strategies to influence and plan their own lives. In order to do so, we propose to study three interrelated sets of issues.

### **Issue 1: The segmentation of the life course**

Hagestad and Neugarten (1985, p. 35) suggest that every society is characterised by an age system that divides “the life span into recognized seasons of life. The cultural segmentation of life time takes several forms. The periods of life are defined; people are channeled into positions and roles according to age criteria; and privileges, rights, and obligations are based on culturally shared age definitions. Finally, populations are divided into age groups whose interactions are socially structured and regulated” (see also Settersten and Mayer, 1997). In modern society, at least two important transition periods can be discerned. The first is the transition to adulthood, and the second the transition to old age. However, it is unclear at which age a person is considered to be an “adult” or an “elderly person” and which events can be viewed as markers of these transitions. Traditionally, researchers have chosen typical markers, from a set that is potentially very large (e.g. Mitterauer, 1986). Therefore, a *first* research topic concerns the question to what extent citizens perceive the life course as a structured sequence of life phases and which events mark the transition from one stage to the other. Although comparative empirical research on this issue is relatively scarce, recent data collection efforts have shown that progress on this issue is possible. Furstenberg et al. (2004) studied whether respondents thought that a number of life events constitute important markers in defining “adulthood”, using a set of questions developed for the U.S. General Social Survey (fielded in 2002). Respondents indicated the importance of becoming financially independent, completing education, working full-time, being able to support a family, leaving the parental home, getting married and having a child as markers for adult status. This approach could be applied and extended in the ESS, in order to study the events that are perceived to define adult status and older adult status.

### **Issue 2: Social norms concerning life course events**

The importance of *social norms* for life course decision-making during has been stressed repeatedly in the life course literature (e.g. Giele and Elder, 1998; Hagestad and Neugarten, 1985; Neugarten et al., 1965). Such norms concern not only the proper *timing* of specific life events (at what age should they occur?), but also their *sequencing* (in which order should they occur?), their *interdependence* (should some events depend on the occurrence of other events?) and their *quantum* (how often should they occur?). Moreover, norms concerning life

course events can come from different normative units, on different levels—e.g. the society in general, the peer group, the family (Billari and Liefbroer, 2005). Another important issue is whether or not age norms are backed by sanctions (Marini, 1984; Lawrence, 1996; White, 1998). Some, like Marini (1984), argue that to be considered as norms proper, ideas about the appropriate age for events in the life course should be backed by sanctions to prevent transgression. However, it is not clear whether there are any sanctions attached to transgression of age norms and if so, what kind of sanctions. Alternatively, one could argue, following Heckhausen (1999), that no sanctions need to be attached to age norms, given that they have been internalized by most people. Another issue concerns the precision of age norms. Do they prescribe that an event has to occur at a specific age or rather that it should not occur outside a rather wide age-range (Marini, 1984; Settersten and Hagestad, 1996a, 1996b)? Given this lively theoretical debate, it is surprising that so few empirical studies have tried to establish the existence of age norms. Modell (1997) argues that the idea of age norms “has proven so attractive that social and behavioral scientists have tended to accept it with inadequate specification and empirical underpinning”. To redress this situation, the *second* research topic to be tackled by this module concerns the question what age, sequencing, interdependence and quantum norms exist and to what extent these norms are backed by sanctions.

Although little research has been done on this subject, a few studies offer insights that could be useful in framing questions for this part of the module. Veevers et al. (1996) used in-depth interviews and showed the existence of age norms regarding age at leaving home, and they suggested that such norms have a specific role in parent-child interaction. Settersten and Hagestad (1996) presented the first broad empirical study on social norms on life course events, based on a telephonic sample in the Chicago Metropolitan Area. Settersten (1998) extensively reported results from this study on the topic of leaving home. He showed that the vast majority of respondents perceived an age deadline, i.e. an age by which young adults ought to have left home. Seventy-eight percent of the respondents perceived an age deadline for leaving home in men’s lives and 69 percent perceived an age deadline for leaving home in women’s lives. Age deadlines for leaving home were substantially shared by respondents, though some differences existed according to their gender and social group membership. At the same time, most people agreed that no specific consequences, including interpersonal sanctions, were attached to the violation of these perceived age deadlines. This supports the idea that informal age rules may be important in shaping life courses, though they are not necessarily backed up by sanctions. The simultaneous presence of age-related norms and sanctions was investigated by Billari and Mencarini (2004), who showed the importance of double gender standards on age norms concerning first sexual intercourse and marriage using data from a survey on university students.

### **Issue 3: Life planning: the subjective appropriation of the life course**

Besides normative pressure, life planning is thought as one of the major determinants of actual life course experience. The idea of life planning is stressed in particular in the work of the sociologists Beck and Giddens. Beck suggests that “individuals who choose and decide for themselves, who are the staging authors of their own life and identity are the most characteristic figures of our time” (Beck, 2002:152). Giddens indicates that “reflexivity” constitutes a key concept in the examination of the consequences of the modernization process for intimate relationships and for the “self,” because in modern societies it is necessary for competent actors to constantly reflect on their behaviour (e.g. Giddens, 1991, 1992). As a result, life planning becomes a general feature of life. Even more, it is necessary to uphold one’s self-identity: “In a world of alternative life-style options, strategic life-planning becomes of special importance.... Life-planning is a means of preparing a course of future actions mobilised in terms of the self’s biography” (Giddens, 1991, p.85). This implies that individuals are expected to be reflecting on their life and trying to make sense out of it, both retrospectively and prospectively. The ability to plan, according to some authors, can be seen as a key determinant of successful life course transitions. Clausen (1991, 1993), for instance, has shown that adolescents who develop “planful competence” attain higher educational levels and better occupational outcomes (see also Shanahan et al., 1997). A recent study on retirement planning in the Netherlands and the USA provides evidence that

Americans plan more accurately than Dutch do, perhaps due to the different setting of the welfare state in the two countries (personal communication by Kène Henkens [NIDI] and Douglas Hershey [Oklahoma State University]). This suggests that it is not only important to study the extent to which people engage in actual life planning, but also to what extent they have the ability to plan their life, to what extent they feel the necessity to do so, and whether they rely on other actors, like the family or the State, to facilitate their future. Given that no large-scale surveys exist that offer answers to these questions, the *third* research topic to be dealt with in this proposal is what the expectations and capacities of citizens are concerning the planning of their own future life course.

### **The advantage of studying the organisation of the life course within the ESS and its relevance**

As the previous discussion has made clear, the organisation of the life course depends strongly on the kind of institutional arrangements that are present in a society and on potentially long-standing cultural factors shaping the division of the life course in stages and related normative expectations. Therefore, it can be expected that both the actual structure of the life course and the perceptions of and strategies relating to the life course may differ from one society to another. For instance, one could apply or modify Esping-Andersen's (1990; 1999) typology of welfare state regimes to this issue. Examples of questions to be answered include: 'Do citizens in countries belonging to the social-democratic welfare regime type perceive more autonomy and less normative pressures concerning the organisation of the life course than citizens of countries belonging to other welfare type regimes?' and 'Do citizens from countries belonging to the Mediterranean welfare state regimes experience more normative pressure from the family than citizens of countries belonging to other welfare type regimes?' Evidently, many more relevant questions could be envisaged. A pan-European study like the ESS is eminently suited to study the impact of welfare state regimes on the organisation of the life course. Moreover, the contextual and event data connected with the ESS provide a fundamental starting point.

Above, some important scientific reasons for paying attention to the organisation of the life course have been presented. We believe the novelty of the proposed module grants important opportunities for high-level scientific outcomes and publication both at the European and at the global level. However, the proposed module is not only interesting from a scientific point of view, but it relates to recent public debates about the (re-)structuring of the welfare state as well. Important themes in this debate are the retreat of the welfare state and the increased importance of individual autonomy in providing for future needs, for example with regard to pension schemes and health care provisions. Focussing on the perceptions of citizens on the organisation and future of their life course could inform both the public and policy makers about the extent to which citizens feel that they have control over their own life course and about the strategies used by citizens to influence their future life course.

In terms of dissemination we envisage to write a collective book using the information provided by the ESS. In addition, and with high priority, we envisage the preparation of articles for submission to scientific journals. Policy briefs may also be produced with the results of some analyses.

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## **7. Proposed module design:**

Taking into account the theoretical framework developed above, and given the opportunity to propose a module that goes on top of a fixed set of ESS questions, we propose a (potentially rotating) ESS module consisting of four sub-sections of interconnected questions:

1. a set of questions focused on the actual occurrence and timing of life course events (the life course as "observed");
2. a set of questions focused on the perceived division of the life course in stages (focusing on what defines an "adult" and an "elderly" person);
3. a set of questions focused on perceived social norms concerning life course events;
4. a set of questions focused on life planning.

Below, we further elaborate on the design of each of these four sets of questions.

### *1. The actual occurrence and timing of life course events*

This subsection contains question on the actual occurrence and timing of major events in the life course of the respondents. Some of this information is already available in the fixed part of the ESS (e.g. through the household roster). In addition, some questions on the occurrence and timing of events that were included in the Wave 2 rotating module on "Family, Work, and Well-being" refer to life course trajectories and could be used. In that module, some questions were posed on the timing of events, such as G50 on age at first birth (for children not currently in the household), G108 on the year of retirement, and G117 on the year when the respondent started his/her first job. In addition, questions were posed on the sequencing of life course events (F66 on cohabitation without being married) and on quantum (F68 on having ever experienced divorce, and G46 on the total number of children). Only a limited number of additional questions may be added to this set (e.g. timing/sequencing of home-leaving and union formation, grandparenthood). Besides on questions from ESS Wave 2, this subsection could draw from the experience gained by working on other large-scale comparative surveys (e.g. Fertility and Family Surveys, Generations and Gender Survey) that included questions on the occurrence of life events.

Including these questions on the actual occurrence of events is important for at least two reasons. First, we know from longitudinal studies in a variety of societies that the experience of life course events may have an impact on values and perceptions and the other way round (e.g. Lesthaeghe, 2002). Second, a module containing information on the actual timing, sequencing and quantum of events provides information that can be analysed separately, both from a comparative point of view and in connection with the standard background factors of the ESS (e.g. connected to life satisfaction or happiness—question B24 and C1 of wave 2, to value orientations in general, to social relationships). Moreover, similar questions have been asked within the ESS (e.g. question G12 of wave 2, on the year

in which the respondent first started living in the same household with husband/wife/partner). We estimate that, on top of the questions posed in the fixed part of the ESS, this subsection will include approximately 10 questions.

## *2. The perceived division of the life course in phases*

This subsection contains questions on the perceived division of the life course in phases. More specifically, we propose to investigate what defines an “adult” person and what defines an “elderly” person. For what concerns the definition of adulthood, we propose to include a sub-set of the questions included in the U.S. General Social Survey, fielded in 2002—both Billari and Hagestad could exploit their close contacts with U.S. researchers Furstenberg and Settersten, who are among the authors of that module. Questions concerning the definition of older adulthood should proceed in an analogous way, although linked to different events (e.g. children leaving the nest, retirement, grandparenthood, death of a parent, death of a partner). We estimate that this subsection will include approximately 10 questions.

## *3. Social norms concerning the life course*

This subsection contains questions on norms concerning the timing, sequencing, interdependence and quantum of life events. In addition, some questions on the possible sanctions that are attached to the transgression of norms are posed.

For what concerns the *timing*, we propose to focus on a key set of life course events that are supposed to be of key importance in the transition to adulthood and in the transition to older adulthood, such as leaving the parental home, union formation, parenthood, entry into the labour market and retirement. For each of these events, we propose to include questions on age deadlines, concerning lower limits (e.g. when is a person too young to retire?), upper limits (e.g. when is a person too old to live with her/his parents?) or both (in the case of parenthood). These questions should allow for a “there is no limit” category, and could be gender-specific, in order to throw light on the different normative organisation of women’s and men’s life courses. Moreover, we propose to investigate the sanctions connected to the violation of these limits. The sanctions should be linked to peers and relatives. When we put the focus on *sequencing* and *interdependence*, questions could be included on norms concerning cohabitation before marriage, having children before marriage, the combination of education and family life, the combination of work and family life, the combination of grandparenthood and retirement and the interrelation between careers of partners. Although the *quantum* of events (in particular on the number of children) is of great interest, we do not propose to include questions in the ESS module, due to the limited available questionnaire space and to the presence of questions e.g. on the number of children in other surveys (Eurobarometer, Generations and Gender Survey).

The team has extensive experience on implementing these types of questions in both large-scale questionnaires and on an international scale. For what concerns the timing of events, Hagestad (together with Settersten) has pioneered the empirical investigation of age deadlines in a study focussed on the Chicago Metropolitan Area, and has contributed to the development of studies in Norway. Billari and Liefbroer have implemented questions on timing and sequencing norms in large-scale surveys fielded in Bulgaria, Italy (including the German speaking area of Italy), and the Netherlands. Billari has been the main international co-ordinator of a survey of University students in which questions on norms and sanctions were posed to students living in very different societies (Australia, Bulgaria, France, Italy, Japan, Poland, Romania, Russia, the United States). In order to be able to investigate the gender-specificity of norms, we aim at exploring with ESS survey methodologists the opportunity to create a split-ballot design when using CAPI (which has been already designed for a similar task by Liefbroer and Billari for a large-scale survey fielded in the Netherlands). We estimate that this subsection will include approximately 20 questions.

#### *4. Life planning*

This subsection of the module contains three types of questions. First, questions should be posed on the extent to which respondents feel that they have control over their future life course. The less control they perceive, the less likely it will be that they will actively engage in life planning activities. In addition, it can be hypothesised that the perception of control differs between different types of welfare regimes. Second, questions should be posed on the extent to which respondents actually engage themselves in planning their future life course. Third, questions should be posed on the expected role of the family and the State in charting and facilitating the future life course of citizens. Billari, Liefbroer, and Spéder have fielded questions in surveys held in Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy and the Netherlands that may be useful to this purpose. Moreover, scales on retirement planning developed by Henkens and Hershey for a comparative study of the Netherlands and the United States should be a useful source. We estimate that this subsection will include approximately 10 questions.