



The first cohabiting union and the timing of first births.

A comparison between France and
Hungary.

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this presentation is to analyse the timing of first births in relation to the first union and more generally to study the arrival of the first child in France and in Hungary since the generations born the 1930's.

Important changes took place in the 20th century concerning schooling, the formation of unions, and the integration of young people in the world of work. Entry into the adulthood takes place later since schooling lasts longer, the formation of the first union is delayed and integration into labour market is more difficult (Galland 2000, Prioux 2005). At the mean time the timing of first births depends on different events as the entry into a stable union, the end of studies or of the first job.

Changes in the timing of these events which mark passage to adulthood began in France at the second part of the 20th century and took place in two times in Hungary. In the latter the extension of studies began at the 1950's but other changes began only after the political-economic change in 1989 that established political pluralism and capitalism economic system. Unemployment appeared at once and several important changes in the society, as cohabitation, increase of age at first marriage and of first birth were accelerated (Kamarás 2001, S. Molnár 1998).

We show in this paper how the timing of entry into adulthood has changed in the two countries in the last generations and the influence of some socio-demographic factors on the timing of the first child after the begin of the first cohabiting union.

DATA AND METHOD

The first waves of the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS) in France and in Hungary are used. The two countries participate to Generations and Gender Program of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the aim of which is to produce, with three waves of face to face interviews, longitudinal and comparative data between several countries.

The first wave has taken place in Hungary in 2001 and in France in 2005. In France 10 079 persons aged between 18 and 79 years have been interviewed and in Hungary 16 363 persons between 18 and 75 years. The registration of the date of the main life event histories (e. g. end of studies, birth of the children, first relationship, first marriage, first job) allows us to make an event history analyses to see the sequence of events and its change over the generations.

Event-history analysis is used and more precisely actuarial method for descriptive analysis and Cox regressions for the explanatory models.

Using the exact date of several events – end of studies, first cohabitation, first marriage, birth of the first child, first breaking off – we follow life events and analyse the sequence of the events according to five groups of generations.

Actuarial method is used to describe the arrival of the first child during the period of observation. This begins for each individual at the begin of the first cohabitation and ends at the date of the arrival of the first child for those who have already at least one child – regardless of the fact if the first child arrived in the first union or later – and at the date of interview for those who didn't have a first child before. Survival functions have been tested in the two countries firstly according to gender and afterwards according to generations and school degree separately for men and women.

Cox regressions are used to explain the timing of the arrival of the first child after the begin of the first union. The explanatory variables introduced into the models are year of birth, school degree, age at the first cohabitation and the history of the first couple. This last variable is a time-dependant variable that measures the effect of having cohabited before marriage or not, the fact of cohabitation at the moment of the interview or having broken off the first union.

We analyse people who have lived at least once in a cohabiting couple.

RESULTS

The Cox regressions show that the timing of the first birth according to the begin of the first cohabiting union is mostly influenced by the history of the first union. One of the most important effects is the fact that beginning a cohabiting union by marriage increases the probability of the arrival of the first child and this in the two countries. When the first union ends by separation however, the timing of first birth is delayed, more in Hungary than in France. The difference is especially important between French and Hungarian men, but even in the case of women the probability is divided by two.

Generation effect shows different results in the two countries. In France the timing seems to be more delayed in recent generations relatively to the begin of the first union, while in Hungary it seems to be more accelerated.

School degree has a negative effect on the timing of the first birth as well as age at first union and this in the two countries. With the increase of school degree and of age at first cohabitation the probability of first births decreases, and this in a more important way in

France than in Hungary. The negative effect of school degree is in the two countries more important in the case of women than is the case of men.

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