

## Changes of marital status: a 1991-2012 comparative analysis in member states of the European Union

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**Abstract.** *The aim of this cross-national comparative research is to identify the profile of marital statuses distribution within the member states of the European Union. The paper brings empirical evidence on a horizontal perspective at the level of the years 1991 (EU-15), 2003 (11 countries), and 2012 (14 countries) as well as a vertical dimension: 1991-2003 (four countries), 2003-2012 (six countries), and 1991-2012 (seven countries). The selection of years was due to the longest period of time covered with comparable Eurostat data. Recommendations for further consolidation of Eurostat database on population by marital status are included.*

**Key words:** sociology of family, marital status, European Union

**JEL Codes:** A 14, Z 13, Z 18.

### 1. Introduction

Current families are challenges by labour market participation of women, gender distribution, life style, increased time dedicated to education, postponement of marriage and decision to have children, family support policy, and liberalisation of abortion policies [1], [2], [3], [4], [5], [6], [7]. Research on families emphasise two opposite contradictory movements: its privatisation alongside larger publicity [8].

Case studies on assortative mating when choosing a spouse emphasised the role of education system as a marriage market, the decision model of marital choice, changes of gender-specific preferences, and mechanisms of social origin [9]. American studies on reasons for choosing a single life includes: shifting values encouraging singlehood (reality versus idealized images of marriage, growth and change versus culturally set roles, great expectations versus settling for something less), growing number of practical alternatives (women's changing economic and social needs, anonymity of sexual freedom, convenience) [10]. The paper contributes to cross-national comparative analysis of current distribution of marital statuses.

### 2. Methodology

The paper is based on secondary analysis of population by marital status Eurostat data, the statistical office of the European Union (EU). The paper is part of a post-doctoral programme focus on social policy changes underwent as outcome of the EU accession. In this respect, the EU-28 member states are analysed by three categories: EU founder states<sup>1</sup>, other old member states than the EU founders<sup>2</sup> (first four accession wave countries); and Central and East European (CEE) member states (last two accession wave countries)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> In alphabetic order: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and The Netherlands.

<sup>2</sup> In both chronologic order of EU accession, and alphabetic in case of the same EU accession year: Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom (1973); Greece (1981); Portugal, and Spain (1986); Austria, Finland, and Sweden (1995).

<sup>3</sup> The fifth EU accession wave: Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Hungary (2004); Bulgaria and Romania (2007); and the sixth accession wave: Croatia (2013).

Due to available data limitations, the original intention to analyse the marital status change in EU member states was transformed to horizontal analysis for: 1991 (EU-15), 2003 (11 countries), and 2012 (14 countries). Marital dynamic is researched for two separate decades: 1991-2003 (four countries), and 2003-2012 (six countries), and for two consecutive decades 1991-2012 (seven countries). The selection of years 1991 and 2012 was done in order to cover the largest period of time. As a limit of the research, data are not available for all EU member states or for the same countries in selected years. Consequently, conclusions only apply for the countries referred to in the paper. Per category of member states, the 1991-2003 analysis covers three EU founders (Belgium, France, and Germany), and one other old member state then the EU founders (Sweden). The 2003-2012 section is focus on six CEE member states; Slovenia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Hungary, Czech Republic, and Romania. The 1991-2012 part refer to four EU founders (France, Germany, Italy, and The Netherlands), and three other old member states (Denmark, Finland, and Sweden).

1991 database includes five categories of marital status: “single persons” (never in legal union); “married persons”; “widowed persons”; “divorced persons”; and “separated persons”. Only Spain and Italy registered “separated persons” in 1991. A further harmonisation of this definition would either allow for more accurate data collection, either would support the adjustment of marital categories. All 1991 marital categories were kept in 2003 and 2012 Eurostat databases. Four new categories were added: “persons in registered partnership”; “persons whose legal union ended with the death of the partner”; “persons whose legal union was legally dissolved”, and “persons with unknown marital status”. “Persons in registered partnerships” were only recorded in 2012 in five out of 14 analysed countries. No data for “persons whose legal union ended with the death of the partner”; or “persons whose legal union was legally dissolved” were recorded in 2003, and in 2012. “Persons with unknown marital status” were recorded in 2003 only in Slovenia, and in 2012 in metropolitan France. Only Italy registered “separated persons” in 2012. The total population for each EU member state was only recorded in 1991 and is composed exclusively by the analysed marital categories. We recommend the addition of the total population in 2003 and 2012 alongside info on people not answering and of people not knowing the answer.

### **3. Marital statuses in EU member states in 1991, 2003 and 2012**

Available 1991 data is focus on EU-15. 2003 includes four EU founders (Belgium, France, Germany, and the Netherlands); one other old member states than the EU founders (Sweden); and six CEE countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia). Available 2012 data covers four EU founders (France, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands); three other old member states (Finland, Denmark, and Sweden); and seven CEE countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia). Six CEE countries (Bulgaria, Croatia Cyprus, Estonia, Malta and Poland) are not included in Eurostat data base. Further consolidation of Eurostat data base with data on current missing years and EU member states will support an extended European comparative analysis.

#### **3.1. Marital statuses in 1991 in EU-15**

The research is focused on Western European countries: on the six EU founders (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and The Netherlands), and all nine other old member states (Denmark, Ireland, United Kingdom, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Austria, Finland, and Sweden). The most frequent distribution of marital status (11<sup>4</sup> countries) includes (by decreasing order): married persons, single, widowed, divorced, and separated. Three countries<sup>5</sup> registered the distribution: separate persons, married, widowed, and divorced. Only Sweden had the profile: single persons, married, divorced, and widowed.

<sup>4</sup> By the total number of population in ascending order: Luxembourg, Austria, Belgium, Portugal, Greece, The Netherlands, Spain, United Kingdom, France, Italy and Germany

<sup>5</sup> By the total number of population in ascending order: Ireland, Finland and Denmark

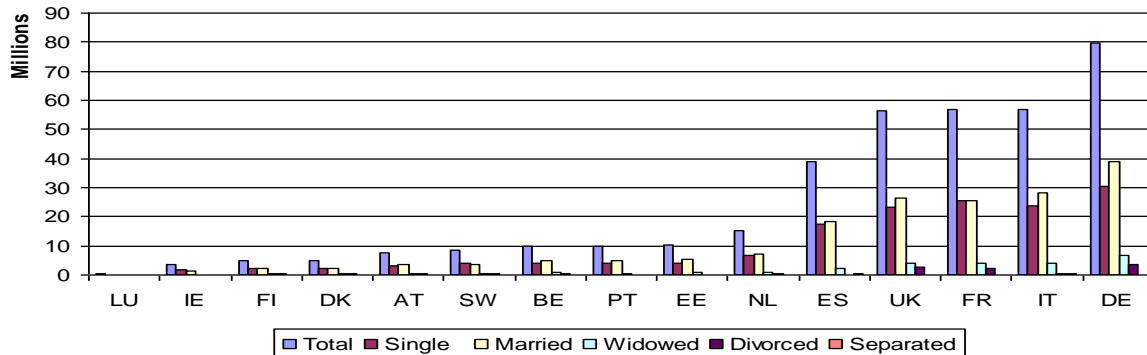


Fig. 1: Distribution of population by marital status in 1991 for 15 EU Member States  
 Source: Eurostat database Population by sex, age and marital status

The first frequent marital status in 1991 was “married persons” in eleven EU member states and “single persons” in four countries. The lowest percent of married persons was in Ireland (38% of the total population) and the highest in Greece (52%). Four pairs of countries had the same percent of married people: Austria and France (45%); The Netherlands and United Kingdom (47%); Luxembourg and Spain (48%) and Belgium and Italy (50%). Germany had the lowest percent of single persons (38%) and Ireland the highest (55%). Two pairs of countries had a similar percent of single persons as percent of the total population: Denmark and France (45%), and Finland and Sweden (46%). No commonly shared values of single and married people were identified. Still slight differences were noticed for three pairs of countries:

- Spain, and France: 45% and 47% single persons, 45% married persons;
- Italy and Portugal: 41% and 50% single persons, 51% married persons;
- The United Kingdom, and the Netherlands: 43% single persons, and 47% and 41% married,;

Within the eleven EU member states with a higher number of married persons than single ones, the smallest difference was in Spain (2%) while the biggest was in Belgium and Greece (12%). In France the number of marriages is slightly higher than that of single persons: 44.75% compared with 44.70%. Three pairs of countries with larger number of married people than single ones registered common differences: Luxembourg, and Italy (8%); Portugal, and Germany (10%), and Belgium, and Greece (12%).

Denmark had the lowest difference with 3% more single persons than the married ones. Ireland had the most dramatic 1991 difference with 18% more singles persons than the married ones. The third position as marital status in 1991 is occupied by widowed persons in all analysed countries. The lowest value was 5% in Ireland. The highest value was 8% recorded in Austria, Belgium, Germany, and Luxembourg.

Divorced persons represent the fourth marital status in EU-15 in 1991. The lowest number was in Spain with 0.4% of the total population. In Denmark and in Sweden the number of widowed persons was equal to the divorced representing 7% of the total population. This represents the highest 1991 value for EU-15 divorced persons. The number of widowed persons was (almost) doubled than divorced in Luxembourg, Belgium, France, and Germany. Four pairs of countries sharing common values were identified:

- Greece and Italy (7% widowed persons, and 1% divorced);
- Denmark and in Sweden (7% widowed persons, and 7% divorced);
- Belgium and Luxembourg (8% widowed persons, and 4% divorced);
- Austria and Germany (8% widowed persons, and 5% divorced).

Separated persons were only registered in Spain, and in Italy as 1% of the total population. For more details please consult Annex 1 Population EU-15 by marital status as percent of the total population in 1991.

### 3.2. Marital statuses in 2003 for 11 EU member states

The research is focused on eleven member states including five Western European countries (four EU founder states – Belgium, France, Germany, and The Netherlands, one other old member state-Sweden); and six CEE member states: Lithuania, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary and Romania. The

most frequent distribution (five countries<sup>6</sup>) of marital statuses by decreasing order was: married persons, single, widowed and divorced. Three countries<sup>7</sup> registered the distribution: single persons, married, divorced and widowed. Two countries<sup>8</sup> registered the distribution: single persons, married, widowed and divorced. Croatia's distribution was: married persons, single, divorced and widowed.

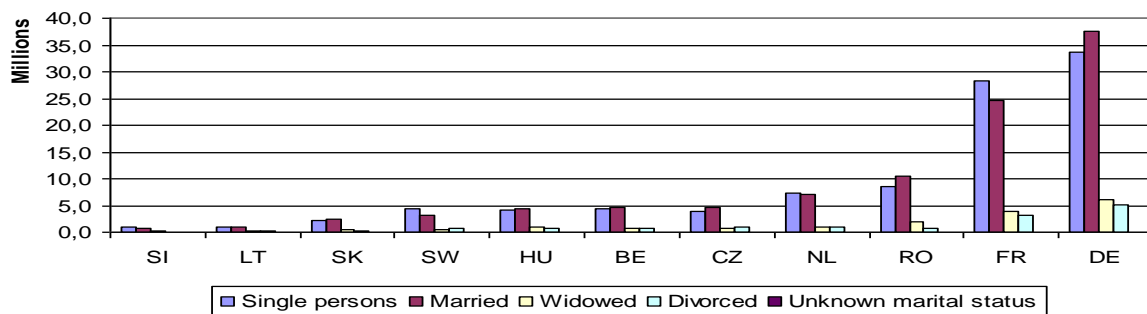


Fig. 2: Distribution of population by marital status in 2003 for 11 EU Member States  
 Source: Eurostat Population on 1 January by age, sex and legal marital status

The first marital status as percent of the total population was married persons in six countries. The lowest value (35%) was in Sweden, while the highest (48%) in Romania. Four pairs of countries with common percent of married persons were identified: Lithuania and France (41%); Slovenia and Hungary (42%); Slovakia and Belgium (45%); and Czech Republic and Germany (46%).

The second 2003 most frequent marital status was "single persons". The lowest number was in the Czech Republic (38%) and the highest (50%) in Sweden. Two pairs of countries registered similar values of single persons: Hungary and Romania (40%); and Lithuania, Belgium, and Germany (41%).

The percent of married people as from the total population and single ones was equal (41%) in Lithuania. The most dramatic difference was in Sweden where the percent of single persons was 15% higher than married persons. No pairs of countries sharing common proportions of married compared with single persons were identified in 2003. Yet slightly similar percentage values were recorded in: Belgium (41% of single persons, 45% married); and Germany (41% of single persons, 46% married).

The lowest percent of widowed persons (5%) in 2003 was in The Netherlands while the highest one (10%) was in Hungary. The lowest number of divorced persons (4%) was in Slovenia, and Romania and the highest (10%) in Lithuania. The number of widowed and divorced persons represents almost the same percent in Belgium (7%); and in Czech Republic (8%). In Romania the number of widowed persons was double than divorced ones, and almost double in Slovenia. One pair of countries sharing the same values was identified: Slovakia and France with 7% widowed persons compared with 5% divorced. For more details please consult Annex 2 Population by marital status as percent of the total population in 2003.

### 3.3. Marital status in 2012 for 14 EU member states

This section is focused on four EU founder states (Germany, France, Italy and The Netherlands); three other old member states (Denmark, Finland and Sweden), and seven CEE countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovenia, Slovakia and Romania). The most frequent distribution of marital statuses by decreasing order was: single persons, married, divorced, widowed, in registered partnership and separated (seven countries<sup>9</sup>). Three countries<sup>10</sup> had the distribution: married persons, single, widowed, and

<sup>6</sup> By the total number of population in ascending order: Slovakia, Hungary, Belgium, Romania and Germany

<sup>7</sup> By the total number of population in ascending order: Lithuania, Sweden and the Netherlands

<sup>8</sup> By the total number of population in ascending order: Slovenia and France

<sup>9</sup> By the total number of population in ascending order: Latvia, Slovakia, Finland, Denmark, Hungary, Sweden, and the Netherlands.

<sup>10</sup> By the total number of population in ascending order: Lithuania, Romania, and Italy.

separated. Two countries<sup>11</sup> registered the distribution: married persons, separate, divorced, and widowed. Other two countries<sup>12</sup> had the distribution: separate persons, married, widowed, and divorced.

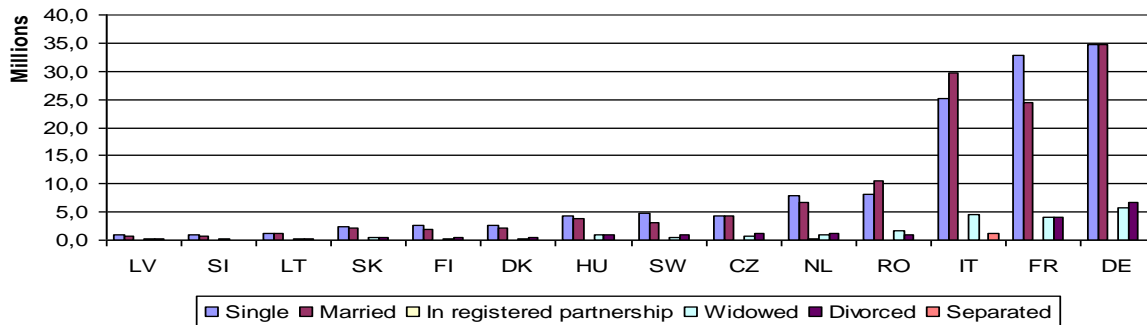


Fig. 3: Distribution of population by marital status in 2012 for 14 EU member states  
 Source: Eurostat, Population on 1st of January by age, sex and legal marital status

The first most frequent marital status was single person in nine countries and married one in five. The lowest percent of single people (38%) was recorded in Romania while the highest (52%) was in Sweden. Three pairs of countries shared similar proportion of single persons: Latvia and Germany (42%); Slovakia and Hungary (43%), and Denmark, Finland, and the Netherlands (47%).

Among the analysed countries, the lowest value of married people (34%) was in Sweden while the highest one (50%) was in Romania. Three pairs of countries recording similar numbers of married persons as percent of the total population were identified: Finland, France and Latvia (37%); Slovenia and the Netherlands (40%); and The Czech Republic, Germany, Lithuania and Slovakia (42%).

In Germany married people (42.4%) was similar single people (42.3%). The lowest value of divorced rates (5%) was in Romania while the highest (12%) was in Latvia. No divorced persons were recorded for 2012 in Italy. Three pairs of countries sharing the same percent of divorced persons were identified: France and Slovenia (6%); Denmark and Germany (8%); and Finland and Sweden (10%).

Denmark, Finland, The Netherlands, and Sweden scored the smallest values (5%) of widowed persons. The highest percent of 10% was recorded in Lithuania and Hungary. Three pairs of countries sharing common values of widowed persons were identified: Czech Republic, Germany, Slovakia, and Slovenia (7%); Italy and Romania (8%); and Hungary and Lithuania (10%).

The most dramatic difference between widowed and divorced persons was in Sweden where divorced persons were by 5% more. One pair of countries (Germany and Slovakia) sharing common values was identified: 8% divorced persons and 7% widowed. The number of divorced and widowed persons was equal in France (6%), and in Hungary (10%). The proportion of divorced persons was double than widowed in Finland and Sweden. The number of widowed persons was almost double than divorced in Romania. For more details please consult Annex 3 Population by marital status as percent of the total population in 2012.

#### 4. Dynamics of marital statuses for the period 1991-2012

This section includes three parts: 1991-2003 (Belgium, France, Germany, and Sweden), 2003-2012 (Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Romania), and 1991-2012 (The Netherlands, Italy, France, Germany, Finland, Denmark, and Sweden). The comparative analysis for 1991-2012 does not include all analysed EU member states due to lacking information. Further consolidation of Eurostat data with comparative information on all missing member states would allow for a detailed and comprehensive comparative analysis of changes in marital status.

<sup>11</sup> By the total number of population in ascending order: Czech Republic, and Germany.

<sup>12</sup> By the total number of population in ascending order: Slovenia, and France.



#### 4.1. Dynamics of marital status 1991-2003 in four EU member states

This section is focus on three EU founder states (Belgium, France and Germany), and other old member states than the EU founders (Sweden). Research results are presented by proportion of marital categories from the total population in 1991.

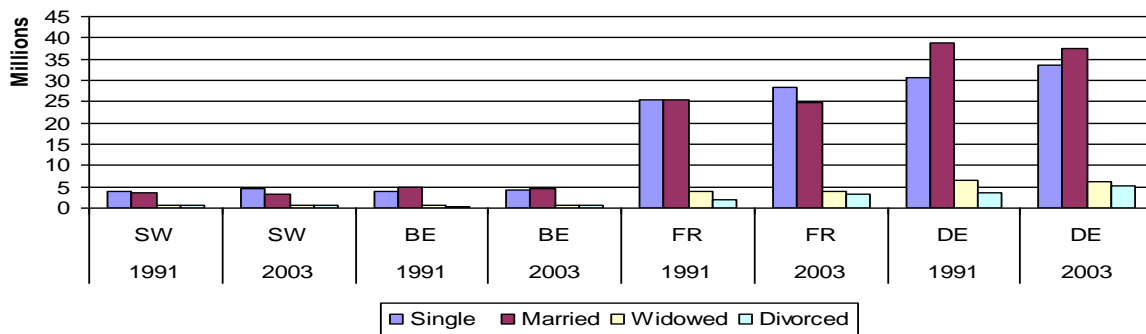


Fig. 4: The 1991-2003 marital changes as percent of the total population  
 Source: Eurostat database Population by sex, age and marital status

Belgium, France and Germany shared in 1991 the marital distribution: married persons, single, widowed and divorced. At the opposite end is Sweden with: single persons, married, divorced and widowed. Data for 2003 shows different four marital profiles in analysed countries.

	M S W D	M S D W	S M W D	S M D W
1991	BE, FR, DE			SW
2003	DE	BE	FR	SW

Tab. 1: Country profiles by decreased distribution of marital status

Source: Author's calculation based on Eurostat database Population by sex, age and marital status  
 M=married persons S=single (never in a legal union) W=widowed D=divorced

No commonly shared profile for the period 1991-2003 was identifiable. With slight differences per proportion of marital category as percent of the total population, Sweden and Germany preserve their domestic distribution. Belgium maintained the first two positions (married and single), but switched in 2003 the rankings between divorced and widowed people. France switched in 2003 the rankings for single with married persons but kept the same order as top position for both widowed and divorced persons.

As 1991-2003 changes of marital status as percent of the total population, common trends were identified. Single and divorced persons increased, while the number of married people decreased.

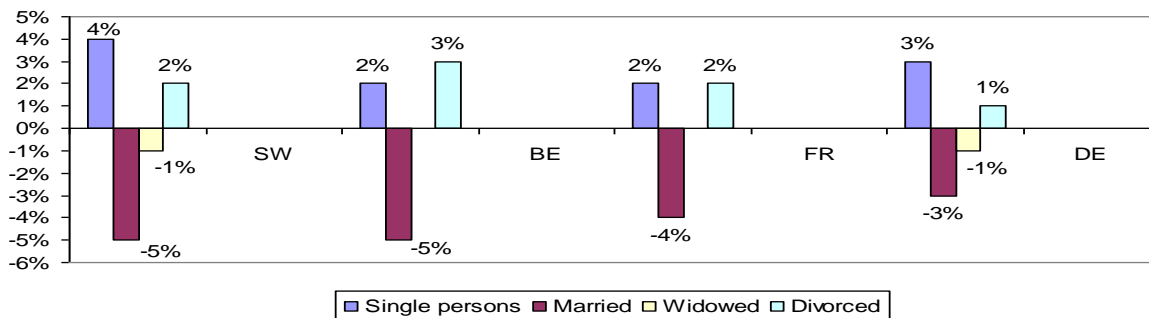


Fig. 5: Marital changes for the period 1991-2003 as % of the total population  
 Source: Author's calculation based on Eurostat database Population by sex, age and marital status

The most dramatic 1991-2003 negative changes was for married people in Sweden and Belgium where it decreased in 2003 by 5% of the total population. The top 1991-2003 positive change was in Sweden with an increased 4% of single people. Slight 1991-2003 changes were recorded for widowed person. No changes of their proportion were recorded neither in Belgium or France. In both Sweden and Germany the number of widowed persons decreased with 1%.

#### 4.2. Dynamics of marital status 2003-2012 in six EU member states

This section is focus on six member states from the fifth EU enlargement wave: Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Romania. Research results are presented in increasing order by the 2003 population. Further consolidation of Eurostat database with information for 2003 Latvia, and 2003 and 2012 data for new EU member states (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Malta, and Poland) would allow for further comparative analysis. Single and married persons were the most frequent marital status and kept their order in the top positions in 2012 compared with 2003 in Czech Republic, Slovenia and Romania. In Hungary, Lithuania and Slovakia the two marital statuses switched their top positions.

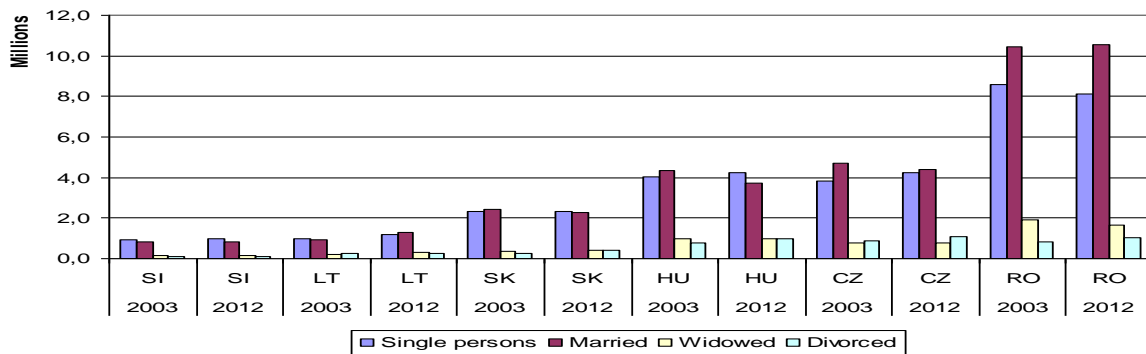


Fig. 6: The 2003-2012 marital changes as percent of the total population  
 Source: Eurostat database Population by sex, age and marital status

The most frequent 2003 distribution of marital statuses in three out of six analysed countries was (in decreasing order): married people, single, widowed and divorced. In 2012 a pair of two countries shared this distribution while another pair of two countries registered: single, married, divorced, and widowed persons. Czech Republic and Slovenia kept the same marital profile in 2003 and 2012.

	M S W D	M S D W	S M W D	S M D W
2003	SK, HU, RO	CZ	SI	LT
2012	LT, RO	CZ	SI	SK, HU

Tab. 2: Country profiles by decreased distribution of marital status  
 Source: Author's calculation based on Eurostat database Population by sex, age and marital status  
 M=married persons S=single (never in a legal union) W=widowed D=divorced

No commonly shared dynamic profile for 2003-2012 was identified. Romania, Czech Republic and Slovenia maintained the same marital profile. The remaining three countries switched between both the first and the second top positions, and the third and fourth one. Slovakia and Hungary shared similar marital change directions in 2003 compared with 2012. Lithuania registered two opposite marital profiles as none of the fourth marital statuses kept its position in 2012 compared with 2003.

As common directions, except for Lithuania, the number of divorced people increased. Proportion of widowed was constant except for Lithuania (2% more in 2012), and for the Czech Republic (1% more in 2012). Growing number of single people and decreased married persons were recorded in Slovenia, Hungary and Czech Republic. The number of married people increased while singles decreased in Lithuania and in Romania. Only in Slovakia, the number of 2012 married people was lower compared with 2003.

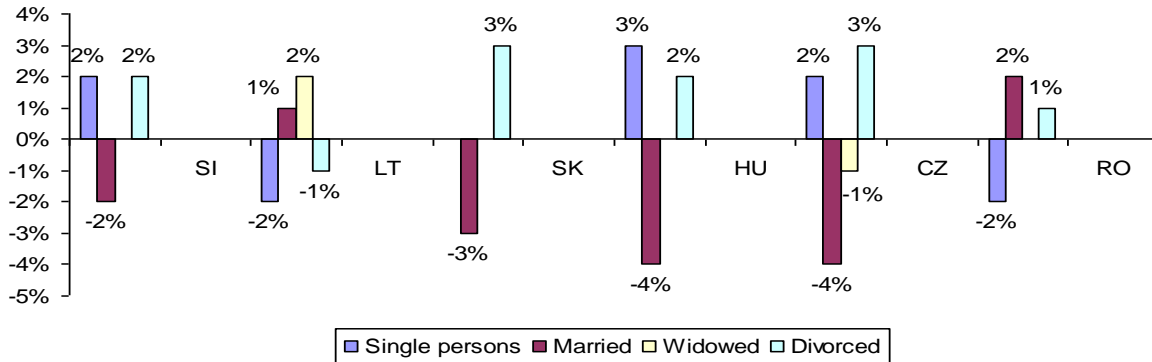


Fig. 7: Marital changes for the period 2003-2012 as % of the total population  
 Source: Author's calculation based on Eurostat database Population by sex, age and marital status

The most dramatic negative change was in Hungary and Czech Republic with -4% married people in 2012. The highest value of positive marital changes was in Slovakia and Czech Republic with 3% more divorced people in 2012. Hungary registered 3% more single persons in 2012. Widowed persons scored the lowest variations. No 2003-2012 differences were noticed in Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania.

#### 4.3. Dynamics of marital status 1991-2012 in seven EU member states

The analysis refers to four EU founders (The Netherlands, Italy, France and Germany), and three other old member states (Finland, Denmark and Sweden). As methodology, we overviewed the distribution of marital status in 1991 and in 2012, we analysed these differences as percent of the total population and compared the changes in the distribution of the marital status. Complementary available 2003 data were used for France, Germany, The Netherlands, and Sweden.

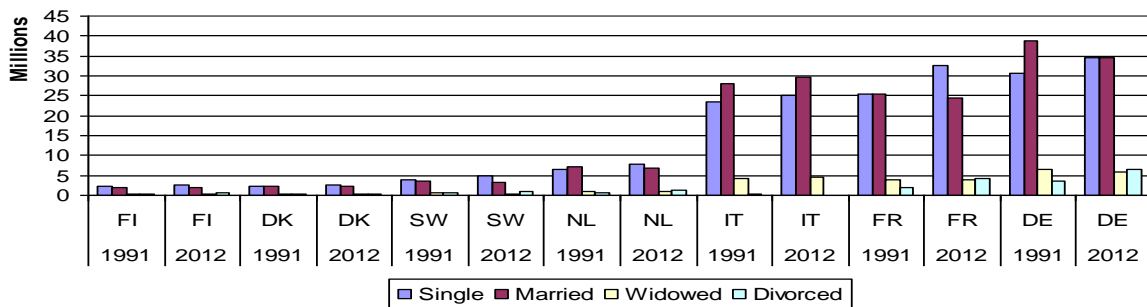


Fig. 8: The 1991-2012 marital changes as percent of the total population  
 Source: Eurostat database Population by sex, age and marital status

The most frequent 1991 distribution of marital status was (in decreasing order): married people, single, widowed and divorced. The most frequent 2003 and 2012 distribution was: single, married, divorced, and widowed. In other words, no single marital status kept its position in the top. The domestic profile of single persons, married, widowed, and divorced was in 1991 in Finland and Denmark and in 2003 and 2012 in France. As new 2012 entry, Germany registered: married persons, single, divorced, and widowed.

	M S W D	M S D W	S M W D	S M D W
1991	NL, FR, IT, DE	-	FI, DK	SW
2003	DE	-	FR	NL, SW
2012	IT	DE	FR	FI, DK, SW, NL

Tab. 3: Country profiles by decreased distribution of marital status

Source: Source: Author's calculation based on Eurostat

M= married persons S=single (never in a legal union) W=widowed D=divorced



The 1991-2012 research outputs do not support the idea of a common marital change dynamic. Two countries (Italy and Sweden) preserved the same profile in 2012 compared with 1991.

Germany, Finland, and Denmark maintained the same order of the two top positions (single and married persons), but switched the third and the fourth ones (widowed and divorced persons). France kept the third and fourth marital positions (widowed and divorced persons), but switched the first two positions (married and single persons). In the case of The Netherlands, all four marital statuses changed their positions in 1991 compared with 2012. This change happened since at least 2003 (as data are not available for other years covering the period between 1991 and 2003). The 2012 marital profile was changed since 2003 in France, and The Netherlands but not in Germany. Collection of 2003 marital statuses related data for Finland, Denmark and Italy could have been providing useful complementary information.

As common trends, the number of married persons decreased, while the number of single grew. Save for Italy, widowed persons decreased and the number of divorced persons increased.

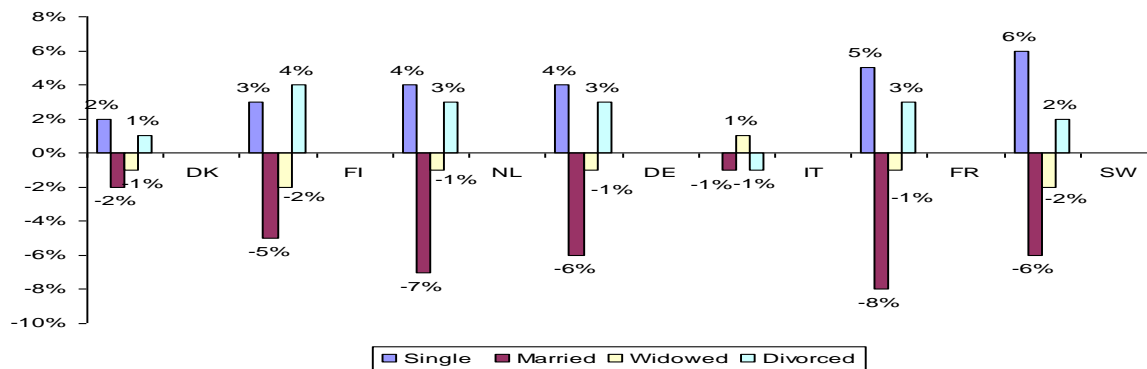


Fig. 9: Marital changes for the period 1991-2012 as % of the total population  
 Source: Author's calculation based on Eurostat database Population by sex, age and marital status

The highest value of a negative marital change was in France where the number of divorced people decreased by 8% in 2012 compared with 1991. The highest value of a positive marital change was in Sweden where the percent of single people increased in 2012 by 6% in comparison with 1991. Widowed persons registered the smallest variations in 2012 compared to 1991. The only unchanged marital status was the single persons in Italy. The analysis of the potential objective constraints or personal reasons behind these changes in marital statuses is not the topic of the current paper but it could be further developed.

## 5. Conclusions

The initial research aim to analyse changes of marital statuses in EU member states was redesigned due to available data. In this respect, a part of the paper is focus on marital statuses in 1991, 2003, and 2012 while the second part is focus on changes occurred between 1991-2003, 2003-2012, and 1991-2012.

The most widespread EU-15 marital status in 1991 in decreasing order of frequencies as percent of the total population was: married people, single, divorced, widowed, and separate persons. Married people was the first marital status in eleven countries: the six EU founders (Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, The Netherlands, and Luxembourg), and five other old member states (Austria, Greece, Spain, Portugal, and United Kingdom). The highest percentage of married people (52% of the total population) was in Greece. Single persons was the first marital status in 1991 in four EU member states: Denmark, Finland, Ireland, and Sweden. Ireland registered both the lowest percent of married people (38%) and the highest value of single ones (55%). Lowest percent of single persons (38%) was in Germany. Widowed persons represented in 1991 the third marital status in EU-15 except for Sweden. The smallest percent of widowed persons (5%) was in Ireland while the highest (8%) was in Austria, Belgium, Germany, and Luxembourg. Divorced persons represented the fourth marital status except for Sweden. The lowest number of divorced people (0.4%) was in Spain while the highest (7%) was in Denmark and in Sweden.

The most frequent 2003 distribution of marital status in 11 EU member states was, by decreasing order of frequencies: married persons, single, widowed, and divorced. Married represented the first marital status in six countries: two EU founders (Belgium and Germany), and four CEE countries (Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Czech Republic). The lowest value (35%) was registered in Sweden while the highest (48%) in Romania. Single persons represented the first marital status in five countries: France, The Netherlands, Sweden, Slovenia, and Lithuania. Czech Republic registered the lowest (38%) value of single people while Sweden the highest (50%). Widowed persons represented the third position in six countries: France, Germany, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Slovenia. The lowest value of widowed persons (5%) was recorded in The Netherlands, while the highest (10%) in Hungary. Divorced persons represented the third position in five EU member states: Belgium, The Netherlands, Sweden, Czech Republic, and Lithuania. The lowest percent (4%) was in Romania and Slovenia and the highest (10%) in Lithuania.

The 1991-2003 research of marital status was focus on four EU member states: Belgium, France, Germany, and Sweden. As common trends, the number of married persons decreased while single and divorced ones increased. The proportion of widowed persons remained constant in Belgium and France and decreased in Sweden and Germany. As 1991-2003 dynamic, Germany and Sweden kept their distribution of marital statuses. As top marital positions as percent of total population, France switched in 2003 married persons with single ones, while Belgium switched in 2003 divorced with widowed persons.

The 2003-2012 research included six countries: Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Romania. The number of married people decreased and single ones increased except for Lithuania and Romania. Divorced persons increased except for Lithuania. The proportion of widowed persons remained constant except for Lithuania and Czech Republic where it decreased. Romania, Czech Republic and Slovenia kept their distribution of marital statuses. Lithuania on one hand and Hungary and Slovakia on the other hand switched their marital distribution in 2012 compared with 2003.

The 1991-2012 analyse of marital status was focus on seven EU member states: The Netherlands, Italy, France, Germany, Finland, Denmark, and Sweden. As common trends, the number of married and widowed persons decreased while single and divorced increased. As an exception, in Italy the proportion of divorced persons decreased, widowed people increased and no single person was registered in 2012. The most frequent distribution of marital status in 1991 was shared by four countries (The Netherlands, France, Italy, and Germany): married persons, single, widowed and divorced. The most frequent 2012 distribution was shared by four countries (The Netherlands, Finland, Denmark, and Sweden): single persons, married, divorced and widowed. Sweden is the only country which kept the same distribution of marital status in 1991, 2003 and 2012. The same marital profile was registered in Germany (1991 and 2003), in France (2003 and 2012), and The Netherlands (2003 and 2012). France and The Netherlands switched the first top position of married in 1991 with single in 2012. Germany, Finland, and Denmark switched the third position of widowed in 1991 with divorced in 2012.

A further consolidation of Eurostat database with data on all EU member states starting with at least their accession to the EU would allow consolidation of obtained research results. In this respect, we recommend conceptual clarifications of categories of marital status used (i.g. single persons, widowed versus persons whose legal union ended with the death of the partner). However in 2003 and 2012 no data were recorded for the categories of "Persons whose legal union ended with the death of the partner", "Persons whose legal union was legally dissolved", and "Separated persons". In this respect, a methodological decision should be taken about the appropriateness to maintain them in future databases. The harmonisation of "registered partnership" among EU member states is to be further prospected. We recommend that total population per country will be included alongside explanations for non-answers, and don't know answers.

As future research, identification of trends in marital status will support the investigation of the impact of different demographic scenarios within the EU member states on a long term perspective (2020, 2040, and 2060) and consequent adjustment of EU and domestic regulations in the field of social policy.

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## 8. Annexes

Annex 1. Population EU-15 by marital status as percent of the total population in 1991

No.	Country	Single persons	Married person	Widowed persons	Divorced persons	Separated persons
1.	Luxembourg	40 %	48 %	8 %	4 %	0 %
2.	Ireland	55 %	38 %	5 %	2 %	0 %
3.	Finland	45 %	42 %	7 %	6 %	0 %
4.	Denmark	45 %	41 %	7 %	7 %	0 %
5.	Austria	42 %	45 %	8 %	5 %	0 %
6.	Sweden	46 %	40 %	7 %	7 %	0 %
7.	Belgium	39 %	50 %	8 %	4 %	0 %
8.	Portugal	41 %	51 %	6 %	2 %	0 %
9.	Greece	40 %	52 %	7 %	1 %	0 %
10.	The Netherlands	43 %	47 %	6 %	4 %	0 %
11.	Spain	45 %	48 %	6 %	0 %	1 %
12.	United Kingdom	41 %	47 %	7 %	5 %	0 %
13.	France	44.6 %	44.7 %	7 %	3 %	0 %
14.	Italy	41 %	50 %	7 %	1 %	1 %
15.	Germany	38 %	49 %	8 %	5 %	0 %

Source: Author's calculation based on 1991 Eurostat data base Population by sex, age and marital status

Annex 2. Population by marital status as percent of the total population in 2003

No.	Country	Single persons	Married person	Widowed persons	Divorced persons	Unkown marital status
1.	Slovenia	46 %	42 %	7 %	4 %	1 %
2.	Lithuania	41.3 %	40.5 %	8 %	10 %	0 %
3.	Slovakia	43 %	45 %	7 %	5 %	0 %
4.	Sweden	50 %	35 %	6 %	9 %	0 %
5.	Hungary	40 %	42 %	10 %	8 %	0 %
6.	Belgium	41 %	45 %	7 %	7 %	0 %
7.	Czech Republic	38 %	46 %	8 %	8 %	0 %
8.	The Netherlands	45 %	44 %	5 %	6 %	0 %
9.	Romania	40 %	48 %	8 %	4 %	0 %
10.	France	47 %	41 %	7 %	5 %	0 %
11.	Germany	41 %	46 %	7 %	6 %	0 %

Source: Author's calculation on 2003 Eurostat data base Population by age, sex and legal marital status

Annex 3. Population by marital status as percent of the total population in 2012

No.	Country	Single persons	Married person	In registered partnership	Widowed persons	Divorced persons	Separated persons
1.	Latvia	42%	37%	0%	9 %	12 %	0 %
2.	Slovenia	48 %	40 %	0%	7 %	6 %	0 %
3.	Lithuania	39 %	42 %	0%	10 %	9 %	0 %
4.	Slovakia	43 %	42 %	0%	7 %	8 %	0 %
5.	Finland	47 %	37 %	0.1 %	5 %	10 %	0 %
6.	Denmark	47 %	39 %	0.2 %	5 %	8 %	0 %
7.	Hungary	43 %	38 %	0%	10 %	10 %	0 %
8.	Czech Republic	40 %	42 %	0%	7 %	11 %	0 %
9.	Sweden	52 %	34 %	0%	5 %	10 %	0 %
10.	The Netherlands	47 %	40 %	0.8 %	5 %	7 %	0 %
11.	Romania	38 %	50 %	0%	8 %	5 %	0 %
12.	Italy	41 %	49 %	0%	8 %	0 %	2 %
13.	France	50 %	37 %	0%	6 %	6 %	0 %
14.	Germany	42.2 %	42.4 %	0%	7 %	8 %	0 %

Source: Author's calculation on 2012 Eurostat data base Population by age, sex and legal marital status

Annex 4. The distribution of analysed EU member states by available data

	EU founder states						Other old member states than the EU founders									CEE member states							
	BE	DE	FR	IT	NL	LU	AT	DK	EE	ES	FI	IE	PT	SW	UK	CZ	HU	LT	LV	SI	SK	RO	
1991	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2003	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	1	-	1	1	1	1
2012	-	1	1	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Source: Eurostat data base Population by age, sex and legal marital status

Annex 5. Distribution of marital profiles

	M S W D			M S D W			S M W D			S M D W			
	EU FS	Oth MS	CEE MS	EU FS	Oth MS	CEE MS	EU FS	Oth MS	CEE MS	EU FS	Oth MS	CEE MS	
1991	BE, DE, FR, IT, NL, LU	AT, EE, ES, PT, UK						DK, FI, IE				SW	
2003	DE		SK, HU, RO	BE		CZ	FR		SI	NL		SW	LT
2012	IT		LT, RO	DE		CZ	FR		SI	DE, FR, IT, NL		FI, DK, SW	LV, SK, HU

Source: Author's calculation based on Eurostat database Population by sex, age and marital status

M= married persons S=single (never in a legal union) W=widowed D=divorced

EU FS = EU founder states Oth MS= Other old member states than the EU founders CEE MS=CEE member states