

Preface

Persistent low fertility levels in Europe have triggered an interest in fertility intentions among population scholars. Knowing why intentions to have a child remain unrealised can facilitate our understanding of the reasons for low fertility and help to draw relevant policy implications.

These issues were addressed in the research project “Reproductive decision-making in a macro–micro perspective” (REPRO) run under the European Commission’s 7th Framework Programme. REPRO was designed to update existing knowledge and to generate new scientific knowledge about the factors that drive changes in birth rates and influence the reproductive decision-making of contemporary Europeans. The three-year project was completed in 2011.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was applied to understand the reproductive decision-making of individuals. While this micro-level approach constituted an important backbone of REPRO, it was also embedded in the macro-level settings in which individuals formulate their personal decisions. REPRO comprised five substantive work-packages, each taking a different macro-, micro- or macro–micro perspective of reproductive decision making. This structure is reflected in Chaps. 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 of this book. Chapter 1 introduces the fertility context into which REPRO was born and the macro–micro and TPB frameworks that underpin the project and the book. The last chapter summarizes key findings from research undertaken within REPRO, and by members of the REPRO team and their colleagues, since the project’s conclusion glances at the road ahead and considers implications of the new theory, methods and findings from the REPRO project for future research and policy. The authors are members of the REPRO team.

The book is written for a wide range of readers. It can be used by graduate students who want to get acquainted with the formation of reproductive decision-making, by scientists interested in this topic and by policy advisors. The authors believe that the findings obtained in the REPRO project and reported in this book have opened up new ways of obtaining profound knowledge about reproductive decision-making and suggest new ways of considering the effects of policy on fertility decisions. We trust that readers find it valuable.

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Dimiter Philipov
Aart C. Liefbroer
Jane E. Klobas

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Philipov, D.; Liefbroer, A.C.; Klobas, J. (Eds.)

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