

**“Differences in delaying motherhood across European countries: Empirical evidence from the ECHP”**

Cheti Nicoletti

*Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex*

Maria Letizia Tanturri

*Dipartimento di Statistics “G.Parenti” Università degli Studi di Firenze*

Working Paper: Published 2005

Working Paper of the Institute for Social and Economic Research No. 2005-4: 1 – 23

<http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/publications/working-papers/iser/2005-04.pdf>

**Themes:** Fertility and Households

**Regions:** West Europe

**Age Ranges:** 18+

**Keywords:** Fertility

**Abstract:** Age at motherhood has increased in most European Countries in the past decades. The main aim of this paper is to assess the impact of women's education and work experience on the timing of first birth across the European Union (EU). According to the literature - based on income maximisation framework (Gustafsson 2001, Hotz et al. 1997) - women with a higher degree of education and a shorter work experience are more likely to delay motherhood or to remain childless. However, recent micro-level studies have shown contradictory empirical evidence. For instance, higher educated women or career women seem to enter motherhood earlier in the Northern European Countries (Kravdal 1994, Hoem 2000, Andersson 2001). Conceivably, these ambiguous findings might reflect substantial cross-country differences that we would like to point out. Therefore, we conduct an analysis to explain how the probability to enter into motherhood differs across 10 European Union countries by using the European Community Household Panel survey (ECHP). On one side, the gap between countries may reflect differences in the observed characteristics of the national women populations, such as differences in the female labour participation and in the human capital investment. On the other side, the gap may be instead due to different fertility propensities across countries. In the empirical application we try to disentangle between these two reasons.