4
The Influence of International Organizations

This section briefly examines the influence on family policy of international organizations, such as the World Bank and the EU, and argues that in practice they had very little influence on policymaking. It also takes up the Catholic Church in Poland. One could argue that the Polish Catholic Church is not really “international,” since the Catholic authorities in Poland do not necessarily advocate the same policies as Church officials in other countries. But even if differences arise in choices of what issues to emphasize, the Polish Catholic Church rarely goes against the official doctrines developed by the Vatican. This chapter argues that international organizations do not have much influence on family policy, but the EU has had influence on the discourse on gender, which has made feminism more acceptable in the public discourse. This in turn increases the future chances for women’s organizations to gain some influence over policymaking.

If international organizations have great influence on policymaking, then we should be able to observe concrete cases in which these organizations make demands or suggestions for changes, and the post-communist countries then make these changes. If the post-communist governments do not take steps in the direction that the international organizations push for, then it is unlikely the international organizations have had much influence on policymaking. Even if such changes are not observable, however, it is still possible that policymakers perceive the influence of international organizations to be strong. Thus, in all of my interviews with policymakers I asked what kind of influence – if any – international organizations have had on their policies.

Besides influencing policymakers directly, international organizations can also exercise indirect influence, which is harder to ascertain. These paths of influence are shown in Figure 4.1. For example, the Catholic

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Church can influence public opinion, which in turn induces citizens to vote for parties that follow Church policy. As will be discussed below, the Church has been rather passive on the issues discussed in this book, and has, therefore, not tried to influence voters on such issues. It is also possible the Church simply influences voters to be generally more conservative on gender issues, which in turn induces them to vote for parties advocating explicitly genderizing policies. As Chapter 6 shows, however, no strong correlation exists between being an active Catholic and having conservative gender views. In fact, in Poland – where a larger proportion of the population considers itself Catholic than anywhere else in Europe – no statistically significant relationship exists between Church attendance and gender attitudes. In theory the influence could be more indirect: one reason why Church attendance does not influence gender attitudes in Poland could be that the Church influences cultural values in general. Thus, even non-Churchgoers could be influenced by Church teachings. If that were the case, we would expect gender attitudes to be more conservative in Poland than in the other countries in this study, but again Chapter 6 refutes such a hypothesis. Gender attitudes are not more conservative in Poland than in the other countries. The path in Figure 4.1 showing the relationship between international organizations and general cultural values is dotted, to indicate that this relationship is unlikely to exist for other organizations, such as the EU, IMF and World Bank. Perhaps a factor like EU membership does influence gender attitudes in the long run, but such a

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**Figure 4.1** Possible paths of influence for international organizations