# CHANGING FAMILY STRUCTURE AND SOCIAL POLICY: CHILDCARE SERVICES IN EUROPE AND SOCIAL COHESION

# TSFEPS

**Does the diversification of childcare services increase social cohesion?**
**(TRANSVERSAL REPORT)**

*Laurent Fraisse,*
*Alberta Andreotti,*
*Stefania Sabatinelli*

*June 2004*

## TABLE OF CONTENT

## INTRODUCTION

Research conducted as part of the TSFEPS project advanced the hypothesis that childcare services must face up to new social issues: a new focus on the child, as evidenced by a demand for customized early years development and education services; growing complexity in the reconciliation between family and professional life, especially for mothers, allied to the question of a fairer division of tasks between parents; the social exclusion of single-parent families, particularly its effect on children experiencing difficulties, and the combination of social times for family members. To this must be added the preservation of family and social ties as expressed by the questions on the parenthood and in the social participation.

The first section of the research (consisting of national reports[1]) demonstrated that the responses to these different challenges are producing, within *local welfare mix systems*, a cross-section of actors and childcare services, and a hybrid mixture of increasingly localized funding and regulation mechanisms. Taking two or three case studies in each country[2], the second phase of the TSFEPS research has attempted to analyze whether or not the current changes, both in terms of childcare and of local governance, have brought forward new forms of *social cohesion* that can reconcile the diversification of social supply and demand with the cooperation of the various actors: families, public and private actors and associations. Or, conversely, has the diversification of services reinforced local social polarization, with each social category accessing, either by choice or by default, childcare services specific to their family, professional or geographic situation?

### *Welfare mix and social cohesion*

The basic issues for the case studies (WP4) centred on the concepts of welfare mix and social cohesion used to identify how local childcare services are structured. We would like to define the possible definitions of these two terms in the introduction. The use of the term welfare mix must first of all be understood in relation to the informal and private responsibility for the care of young children. Even though families — single-parent, nuclear or extended —, and especially mothers, remain the primary carers of children under three, the question of childcare is becoming the subject of debate and public policy within the majority of the European Union countries, including the countries — West Germany, the United Kingdom, Spain and southern Italy — where the care of young children has long been considered a private, family matter. While the issue of childcare within the family remains central, both qualitatively and quantitatively, the general trend is towards the growth of formal and organized childcare services. Only Bulgaria is seeing a process of returning responsibility for childcare to families.[3]

The notion of welfare mix can also be considered in relation to the welfare state. Within the framework of childcare systems, the point of comparison is the existence of a free and compulsory system of education from about 6 or 7 years of age among the members of the EU. In some countries, such as Belgium, France, Italy, Spain and Bulgaria, the distinction is made between care of children under three and care of 3 to 6-year-olds based on a pre-school system. Pre-school system are a semi-public service in the sense that they are often free of charge and their aims, funding, teaching programmes and the status and remuneration of their professional staff are all directly defined, supervised and regulated by the Ministry of Education or, as is the case in Bulgaria, by the local authorities. Put another way, the regulation, redistribution and

[1] The national TSFEPS reports are available on the Emes site: http://www.emes.net/en/recherche/perse/etudes.php

[2] The areas or cities covered by the studies are Rennes and Montreuil (France), Birmingham (United Kingdom), Frankfurt and Munich (Germany), Consenza, Monza and Pesaro (Italy), Terassa and Granada (Spain), Schaerbeek and Ottignies (Belgium), Stockholm and Östersund (Sweden), Sofia, Pleven, Sevlievo (Bulgaria).

[3] This process of returning responsibility to the family should be seen in the context of the public services' pre-1990 firm policy of externalizing childcare.

management functions are strongly intertwined but not really shared with third parties, such as associations. In any case, none of the countries have plans for a generalized and universal public childcare service for 1 to 3-year-olds, equivalent to that which exists in some countries for 3 to 6-year-olds. It is therefore initially advisable to discuss the childcare welfare mix in comparison with kindergartens and elementary schools.

Behind the idea of welfare mix, there emerge the notions of plurality and diversity that are central to understanding local childcare systems which are less and less concentrated on a single institution (family or local governments), a single type of service, or a single mode of regulation. The approach and methodology of the case studies identified three dimensions of the welfare mix: the diversity of the service providers (public sector, private for-profit sector and third sector, comprising the informal economy) and the services (individual/collective, regular/occasional, traditional/innovative childcare); the mixed economy (private, public, parental), and local regulation mechanisms (hierarchical, market-based and cooperative).

*Social cohesion and childcare services*

The use of the term social cohesion to qualify the childcare developments in European societies has not been totally clear, even if, as we note in the introduction to the second section of this synthesis, the question of social cohesion has in many respects closely followed the great traditions of sociology. If the term social cohesion is sometimes problematical, that is because it is a "quasi-concept", "a hybrid concept which the political game proposes to us increasingly frequently, both as a means of detecting possible agreements on a reading of reality and of building them" (Bernard, 1999, p.2). The issue is thus more or less relevant according to the histories and socio-political contexts of the different European countries. This is the reason why it has been as much a subject of discussion as of agreement among the TSFEPS project research teams.

Nonetheless, the ambivalence aspects, or even the ambiguities, of the concept of social cohesion are also useful in identifying, on the one hand, *the difficult search for a European social model*[4], and, on the other, *the absence of stability in the policies and the childcare services for 0 to 3-year-olds* with regard to school or kindergarten systems. At the European level, the strengthening of economic and social cohesion has been one of the European Union's objectives ever since the Treaty of Rome, and has been progressively institutionalized, by the Treaty of Maastricht, and made concrete in the form of policies, particularly by the establishment of structural funds. Behind the social cohesion objective can also be detected the political will that the European project is not limited to setting up a free trade zone and a single currency. Of the five aspects[5] of social cohesion identified by Jane Jenson (1998), the first refers to the feeling of belonging to a particular community. The call for social cohesion will thus be a vehicle for the affirmation of a European identity, the search for some forms of solidarity between states which are members of the same union. The social aspect of this cohesion can be perceived in two areas. The first tends towards the economic and instrumental. Strong developmental disparities between regions and the absence of social infrastructures constitute barriers to the full realization of the single market's potential. Put another way, social cohesion thus appears to be a condition of economic growth. The second level is more to do with identity, in the sense that the European Union is aiming for a specific European social model, characterized notably by "a high level of employment and social protection" (European Union Treaty, article 2, 2002).

[4] We refer to the European social model as a normative target and a subject of debate within the European Union project. With regard to numerous European research projects on national systems of social protection which place the emphasis on the plurality of welfare state systems in Europe (Esping-Andersen, 1999), the European social model only exists at the level of different political projects.

[5] The five aspects of the concept of social cohesion are, according to Jane Jenson: (1) belonging/isolation; (2) integration/exclusion; (3) participation/passivity; (4) recognition/rejection and (5) legitimacy/illegitimacy.

Behind the concept of social cohesion it is possible to detect not only the assertion of a set of social values common to member states, but also the implicit fear that the European heritage of social protection systems is under threat from a European integration that is primarily economic. The issue then would be to avert the risk that a social Europe is constructed by levelling it down to welfare state systems based on minimal social standards.

The ambivalence within the notion of social cohesion seems to us equally productive for a better understanding of *the specific status of childcare services within the education and social protection systems in European societies*. In practice, although the recognition of social protection as a pillar of European social cohesion has not yet been completely established, particularly in the context of the enlargement phase, national and local pro-childcare policies, especially for the under threes, are endowed with less legitimacy than other educational and social policies. The whole gamut of childcare services for 0 to 3-year-olds, or even 0 to 6-year-olds in some countries, continues to be part of a *grey area* in European social states, an area which creates major uncertainties over policy aims, resources and relationships with the private sphere (Eme, 2003). The notion of social cohesion *thus reflects the deficiencies of policies and childcare services for 0 to 3-year-olds in the face of the profound changes in society which the majority of European countries are undergoing*: (a) demographic changes, i.e. the later age at which couples have their first child, smaller families, a lower birth rate (currently less noticeable in France), and an ageing population; (b) changes to family structures, as a result of fewer and later marriages, an increase in unmarried couples and extra-marital births, more frequent divorces, and an increase in the number of single-parent or extended families as well as of people living alone; (c) changes in the labour market, marked by an increase in women's employment, a continuing high level of unemployment, the loss of job security and the flexibility of working hours which have created new restrictions in terms of structuring social times, especially between working time and parental time ; (d) changes in the regulation of national and local childcare systems with the diversification of services both in terms of the types of services (collective childcare and individual childcare) and the type of management (public, independent, association-based), the diversification of public funding, and the growing decentralization of the social services skill-set.

The inter-relation between these changes produces tensions in as much as conditions that no longer correspond to the family and social models of industrial society are on the increase and are no longer finding appropriate responses within the current configuration of policies and social services. Social cohesion ends up being faced with the situation where both individual families and society are asking childcare services to fulfil multiple, sometimes contradictory, functions in the face of a lack of places and diversity of services. The emergence of a discussion on social cohesion will reflect the difficulty of managing the new tensions specific to childcare: the tension between a more complex and flexible articulation of family and professional time and the interests of the child; the tension between the integration of the most underprivileged families (single-parents and the unemployed) and concern about the social mix; the tension between increasing the number of places and guaranteeing and improving the quality of service.

Within this context, analysis of the processes of diversification and regulation of the actors and institutions involved locally in the childcare field has an important role to play; it enables us to understand whether the creation of local welfare mix systems, in recognizing and giving shape to local childcare policies, does or does not strengthen social cohesion on the local level. The first section of this summary proposes to use the TSFEPS case studies to qualify and compare the diversification process affecting services, service providers and the regulatory framework which lends legitimacy to the notion of local childcare welfare mix systems. How can we identify the socio-political and socio-economic dynamics behind this diversification of services? The second section aims to assess the consequences of diversification in terms of social

cohesion — equality of access, quality and participation — taking into account the risks of social fragmentation of the services.

## 1ST SECTION : WELFARE MIX IN LOCAL CHILDCARE SYSTEMS

### 1 – Sharing childcare responsibility between the family and society

*Increasing organized and formal care services*

An initial indicator for evaluating the emergence of welfare mix is the process of "defamilialisation" (Esping Andersen, 1999), materialized in welfare state systems by the continuous process of removing the responsibility of childcare from the family sphere. Although the TSFEPS case studies do not allow a detailed analysis of the time devoted to childcare within families, they do confirm that taking responsibility for children is no longer the exclusive preserve of families and mothers.

How then can we understand the relative positions of the family and society within childcare responsibility? In the absence of detailed breakdowns of time, the TSFEPS reports provide some quantitative indications, like average rates of coverage for children or the rate of increase in the number of places in recent years. Knowing that these statistics are far from being consistent and that we are lacking exhaustive data at the local level, caution should be exercised in making use of them. They do, however, provide a rough estimate that can be used to understand the underlying trends in the division of responsibilities between family and society.

#### *1.1 – Is the concept of welfare mix for 3 to 6-year-olds realistic?*

Looking at the picture presented by the summary of the socio-economic and institutional contexts of the case studies (Andreotti, Sabatinelli, 2003), one of the significant points of difference concerns the situation of childcare for 0 to 3-year-olds and for 3 to 6-year-olds. While the rate of coverage in most of the cities studied by children in the 3 to 6-year-old age group is over 80%, it varies considerably among 0 to 3-year-olds, rarely exceeding 30% (with the exception of public services in Bulgaria, where the coverage rate is often much higher). These figures confirm that *placing control of the education of children from the age of three into public hands is tending to become a norm* within the countries represented in the TSFEPS project. Although this trend is not new in countries with a tradition of providing "écoles maternelles" system (France, Belgium, Bulgaria and, to a lesser extent, Italy) or where there is a virtually universal system for 1 to 6-year-olds, as in Sweden, the case studies confirm that the public investment in and education and pre-school preparation of 3-year-olds are now considered an essential step in "the lifelong learning" process (OCDE, 2001). This is illustrated by the trend of handing over responsibility for pre-school childcare to the Ministry of Education. The most significant changes during the nineties appear to have taken place in Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom. In Munich and Frankfurt, the local authorities continued to finance the creation of kindergarten places during the nineties, resulting in an increase in the coverage rates which are now over 80% in the two cities (Evers, Riedel, 2003, p.20). The English case study also provides an example of steady growth in the number of places (+ 5,000 between 1999 and 2003) in nursery schools and nursery classes. 93% of 3-year-olds and 100% of 4-year-olds now have access to free part-time places (Lewis, Welsh, Tanner, 2003, p.14). In Spain, the average coverage rates in kindergartens for 3-year-olds went from 45.9% in 1992 to 94.7% in 2003 (Vidal, Claver, 2003, p.20).

Taking into account the high levels of coverage rates as well as the trend for making pre-school childcare services for the over-threes standard and universal, *is it relevant to talk about welfare mix in the context of this age-group?* And is it not fair to say that childcare services for 3 to 5-year-olds are now much more similar to the function of a primary school than childcare services for 0 to 3-year-olds? Nevertheless, if we consider that it is appropriate to use the idea of welfare mix to mean the sharing of responsibility for childcare and education between the family and society, it is feasible to argue that this age group is subject to predominantly public childcare which is either standardized or at least highly regulated.

*Differences and limitations of universal childcare for 3 to 6-year-olds: freedom of access, geographical disparities and full-time childcare*

However, looking beyond the comparable coverage rates, it is interesting to highlight the on-going differences in childcare services for 3 to 6-year-olds between the countries and cities studied. An initial difference relates to *freedom of access*. On this point, it is useful to differentiate between Sweden and Germany, which offer places according to the parents' ability to pay, and other countries where access to places is free. A second distinction concerns *local disparities* and the degree to which the childcare and schooling of 3 to 6-year-olds has been made universal. In the countries where the creation of both establishments and places is decentralized (Germany and Spain), strong geographical disparities persist between urban and rural areas as well as between regions. For example, although the region of Catalonia has a coverage rate of almost 100% for 3-year-olds, the attendance rate for children in Andalusia is 80%, 10 points below the national average (Vidal, Claver, p.20). A final difference relates to the *opening hours of the pre-school establishments*, with countries such as Germany and the United Kingdom providing families with part-time rather than full-time childcare. The problems of childcare for 3 to 6-year-olds focuses on the question of o*ut-of-school childcare* which becomes a major challenge, as demonstrated by the German (Munich and Frankfurt) and Belgian (Brussels-Schaerbeek and Ottignies-Louvain la neuve) case studies. Families where both parents are working full-time must often have to resort to additional forms of individual childcare which are either declared (childminders and baby sitters) or undeclared (family or informal care).

### *1.2 – An inadequate increase in childcare services for 0 to 3-year-olds*

For children in the 0 to 3 age group, the contrast in childcare provision in different countries and cities is far more marked. In every case, the low level of coverage (between 10% and 40%) confirms that, on average, *it is still families, and particularly mothers, who are the primary carers for 0 to 3-year-olds* within the local welfare mix systems. Although childcare within the family remains central both in terms of quality and quantity, the general tendency, however, is towards *growth in the provision of formal and organized childcare services*, particularly within the large population centres.

The increase in formal and organized childcare services for 0 to 3-year-olds can be seen as *the sign of a process of legitimizing local childcare policies*; nonetheless the trend remains fragile and uncertain. First of all, because the increase is generally apparent where there is a relative *shortage of childcare places* (with the exception of Bulgaria). Secondly, because the creation and maintenance of childcare services remains relatively sensitive to *the budgetary constraints of local authorities and shifts in the balance of political power*. Finally, because some of the case studies show that acceptance of sharing responsibility for the development and care of young children between the family, the local council and civil society still remains a subject of controversy or resistance outside the big cities. This is the case in certain districts on the outskirts of Rennes, especially in rural areas, where resistance to funding collective childcare facilities reveals the family-centric mindset of certain local councillors. In the city of Cosenza in the South of Italy, the absence of any public childcare infrastructure owes as much to a labour

market that offers few opportunities of employment to women as to a relative consensus shared by local councillors and the populace with regards to a family model in which the division of men and women's roles in the children's education remains traditional. The Bulgarian case studies demonstrate how, within the context of demographic decline, increasing unemployment amongst women and the dismantling of the welfare state, the country is seeing a return to family-oriented childcare following the widespread externalization of the childcare system during the communist period. These examples can be interpreted as signs of resistance to, and the questioning of, the public and long term responsibility for childcare services for 0 to 3-year-olds.

*A situation of continuing shortage for 0 to 3-year-olds*

With the exception of Sweden, the majority of the case study reports highlight the fact that, in spite of the significant amount of new care places created in the nineties, *childcare services for 0 to 3-year-olds are generally characterized by a shortage of places*. Several signs attest to this situation: growing waiting lists for crèches (Munich, Montreuil, Rennes, Monza, Granada and Terrasa), parental pressure applied to local representatives, and the emergence of private services. Of course, care must be exercised with these indicators. For example, the German report highlights the fact that certain mothers, by way of insurance, put their child down for a crèche as soon as they become pregnant, but then cancel their place after the birth. This preventative behaviour can be interpreted as the mothers' way of preserving their choice of childcare in the future, where there is a shortfall situation. It has the effect of lengthening waiting lists, which does not accurately reflect the final demand for places.

Only a few of the case studies seem to escape this *quantitative problem with childcare provision*. The Italian report mentions that, in the city of Pesaro in 2002-2003, the number of places available in public crèches slightly exceeded the number of applications. Of course, it is a matter of some delicacy to interpret this data as an indicator of family satisfaction in relation to a varied and balanced local welfare mix system. But bearing in mind the quality and the reputation of the municipal crèches in Pesaro, this figure seems to us significant. It also shows the importance of childcare provided by the extended family (grandparents) in Italy, which remains the predominant form of childcare, like in Cosenza, or a structure that complements formal childcare services. The other case study that shows an absence of shortage, or even an excess of places, concerns the Maria-Gamla district in Stockholm, where a number of municipal services were obliged to close down in the nineties. This situation is explained primarily by the demographic developments in the area — a heavy inflow of families with children followed by a sudden exodus — which created a varied and abundant range of childcare services. In Bulgaria, there is a balance between supply and demand in terms of quantity, due mainly to a drop in the birth rate coupled with migration.

### *1.3 - Diversification or standardization: divergent developments for the 0 to 3-year-old and 3 to 6-year-old age groups*

The comparison between childcare for 0 to 3-year-olds and 3 to 6-year-olds is not meaningful solely from the quantitative point of view, it is also valuable for understanding the differences between the dynamics of the changes at work in local childcare systems for 0 to 3-year-olds and 3 to 6-year-olds. Whereas, as we shall see in sections 2 and 3, a diversification process is underway in childcare for 0 to 3-year-olds, the TSFEPS case studies tend to confirm that, conversely, *a standardization process is at work in childcare services for 3 to 6-year-olds*. This standardization process is revealed in the centralization of childcare regulations, an increase in public investment, the development of local and often free of charge public childcare services, and the relative standardization of areas such as educational objectives and quality norms.

However, this movement towards standardization takes more or less different forms depending on the country. An example of this is the kindergarten model that can be identified in Belgium, France, Italy and Spain. It is based on a free, full-time, municipal childcare service that is primarily supervised, financed and controlled by central and local governments. It is similar to a universal public childcare service. In these examples, it is difficult to discuss welfare mix because the factors tending towards uniformity and universality of services seem to have the edge over the diversification factors.

The German and English examples present a different form of development as there is no such thing as a kindergarten system. The divide between 0 to 3-year-olds and 3 to 6-year-olds is thus much less pronounced. For example, some facilities, like the "cooperative services" in Germany, take children from 1 to 6 years of age. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the rise in the number of places for 3 to 4-year-olds is principally the result of the development of a public municipal service such as the nursery school and nursery classes in the United Kingdom or the kindergartens in Munich.

Sweden seems to be the only country to escape this divide between the diversification process affecting 0 to 3-year-olds and the standardization process affecting 3 to 6-year-olds. The Swedish examples are useful in demonstrating an original way of reconciling the issues of unifying and diversifying childcare services within a universal childcare system that provides coherent childcare for 1 to 6-year-olds. They demonstrate how a centralized system for regulating objectives, funding and quality has succeeded in adapting to the major development of non-municipal childcare services.

## 2. Welfare Mix and Diversification of Services

As we have pointed out, local welfare mix systems are undergoing a transitional phase whereby a new generation of childcare services is beginning to complement or replace services that are more traditional. The diversification process should therefore be assessed as the capacity to provide three types of services: individual childcare services (childminders, home childcarers and baby sitters), collective childcare services that provide a relatively standardized service (crèches, kindergartens, day nurseries), and new services created to respond to the new demands and issues of social cohesion. The forms of diversification observed in the cities included in the study can be assessed, to some extent, based on the *degree of the development and regulation of individual childcare and new services in comparison with traditional services.*

### *2.1 – Developing individual childcare as a diversification strategy*

A rapid look at the case studies could give the impression that individual childcare is losing ground to collective childcare. By individual childcare we mean childcare in the home of the childminder, or parents (home childcarers and baby sitters). We feel that this impression is deceptive for two reasons. The first is that in many countries — Italy, Spain and Bulgaria — individual childcare remains on the whole informal or undeclared. It does not therefore appear in the statistics, although certain signs (Monza and Sofia[6]) lead us to believe that undeclared individual childcare is developing. The second reason is based on the bias created by the selection process for services covered by the case studies, favouring collective childcare over individual childcare services.

Although Rennes and Munich are the only cities where regular individual childcare is the dominant form of childcare, in the other cities it also represents a significant component of local

[6] In Bulgaria's case, this trend is a rebalancing process in reaction to the pre-1990 widespread prevalence of collective childcare.

welfare mix childcare services, notably for 0 to 3-year-olds. This is the case in Frankfurt, where a third of childcare places are handled by family day care services, or in England where the use of childminders has long been the most popular form of childcare.

The development of individual childcare is generally driven by the lack of places in public crèches, as in Monza and the outskirts of Rennes, the flexibility of childcare service opening hours, in Frankfurt and Pesaro, and a preference for an informal, personalized service, particularly for the under twos, as seen in Montreuil, Sofia and Munich.

*Individual childcare regulation and its limits*

Many local councils have implemented policies for regulating, or even developing, individual childcare. *The sustainable development of individual childcare requires a public funding and regulation system.* We feel that it is valid to distinguish two categories of cities based on the degree of local regulation of individual childcare. The cities of Rennes, Munich, Montreuil, Brussels-Schaerbeek and the English case study are where individual childcare is formally organized by means of childminder registers set up by the local authorities, information and professionalization places for parents and professionals (Rennes), and a services development policy (France and the UK). Individual childcare is at its most visible and developed in these cities. By contrast, the local policy for regulating individual childcare in the other cities remains embryonic (Monza, Pesaro) and synonymous with lower quality compared with collective childcare (Terrassa, Granada), encouraging informal childcare provision to prosper (Sofia).

However, the existence of individual childcare regulations is not always enough to guarantee the growth of this form of childcare. What explanation can be found for the marked growth in childminder services in Rennes and Ille-et-Vilaine, their relative stagnation in Montreuil, their nominal presence in Stockholm and the drop in the number of childminders in the UK? The hypothesis we feel is feasible is based on four factors. Firstly, the existence of a *public childcare funding policy*. The fact that childminding is the dominant form of childcare in France springs primarily from the benefits (AEFEAMA – *allowance for employing a qualified childminder*) and fiscal incentives (AGED – *allowance for home childcare*) granted by the government to parents. In Belgium, support for individual childcare translates as a policy promoting qualified childminders who are encouraged to group together in *crèches familiales* (*family crèches*). Secondly, *the density and quality of the range of local collective services*. In Sweden, the existence of a diversified and high quality collective childcare system is doubtlessly one of the reasons for the negligible development of individual childcare. In the UK, the drop in childminder numbers is partially due to the central government's new funding policy, based on invitation to tender and quality regulation, which is proving to be more selective. Another explanation is that the *socio-economic conditions of the urban areas* covered by the study are decisive. Organized individual childcare remains a form of childcare that is often out of the reach of families with low incomes. The cost of a childminding partially explains the lower usage of this type of service in deprived urban areas. The final obstacle on the development of individual childcare lies in the *poor working conditions and low salaries* that make the profession of childminder or home childcarer fairly unappealing (Frankfurt and Montreuil). This results in a high turnover in the childminder population (Rennes and Montreuil) as well as serious recruitment problems and difficulties in the local regulation of individual childcare quality.

### *2.2 – A new generation of services*

In addition to the development of individual childcare services, the diversification of local welfare mix childcare services also springs from the emergence of a new generation of services. It is interesting to note that these new services do not exist in all the cities in the study. For example, in Spain services remain relatively traditional, centred on crèches. The hypothesis is

that the new generation of services represent an attempt to respond to the new social cohesion issues that the more traditional services do not seem to be designed to deal with. Adalbert Evers (Governing Diversity) identifies several of these issues to explain the growth of the new services. We would like to look at the four main issues.

The first issue springs from the *increasing complexity of reconciling family life and professional life* due to the rise in single-parent families and in unemployment and insecurity on the labour market. Faced with the growth in part-time jobs and fixed-term contracts, the opening hours of traditional childcare services are often too inflexible for families who are looking for an occasional and more flexible service. In the face of the fragmentation of professional and social time, the case studies highlight the emergence of new initiatives: occasional childcare, such as mini-crèches, day nurseries, and the Italian *Tempo per le Famiglie* services, out-of-school childcare services, atypical hours childcare services, and social time policies. A number of traditional services are also trying to adapt by combining regular childcare with occasional childcare based on the development of a multi-service structure.

A second issue relates to the *fight against social discrimination.* In a context where social and economic inequalities are on the up and family instability is rising, access to a childcare service becomes a fundamental element in the professional and social integration of underprivileged social groups: single-parent families, unemployed families and families with immigrant origins. Social integration is structured around three levels: helping parents to find employment, supporting them in their parental tasks and encouraging earlier socialization and early years development for the children. Despite the existence of income threshold and income-linked adjustable fees, the conditions for accessing traditional services are often too standardized for families with social difficulties. In several cities in the study, new childcare services specializing in social integration have been set up: neighbourhood nurseries in deprived areas in the UK, *maisons ouvertes* and other innovative structures in Brussels-Schaerbeek, a multi-cultural crèche in Monza, a *halte-jeu* for immigrant families in Montreuil, a policy for integrating Romany children in Pleven and Sofia.

*Parental participation and parenthood support* represent a third social cohesion issue. The case studies appear to confirm a new parental focus on children, producing the desire to be better informed about, or even involved in, their children's care provision. The boundaries between informal childcare and traditional crèche childcare sometimes seem too inflexible in the traditional services. Furthermore, childcare professionals realize that children's early years development cannot be treated independently from their relationship with their parents. This implies the need for more dialogue between professionals and parents and more attention paid to educational choices and how childcare services function. As far as new childcare services are concerned, a clear distinction needs to be made between two types of initiatives. On one hand are the parental initiatives, such as parental crèches and cooperatives, as found in Germany, France and Sweden. In these types of structures, the parents are involved in setting up the service and its daily running. Parental initiatives tend to involve the more advantaged social categories. The other types of initiatives put the focus on parenthood support. Several initiatives in the Belgian, French and English case studies, often located in deprived areas, provide a structure that is a venue both for children's early years development but also for parents to exchange ideas and information and learn about their educative role.

The final issue concerns the desire to *strike a better balance between children's early years development and their education* within the childcare structures. This concern for an improved integration of, or transition between, socialization and pre-school objectives is particularly active in countries where there is no division between the 0 to 3-year-olds and the 3 to 6-year-olds: Germany, Sweden and the UK. An initiative that particularly stands out from among the new childcare services highlighted by the case studies is the Early Learning Centres programme in the UK, providing an integrated package of services combining early years development and

educational activities as well as offering support to families and access to health services. Service cooperatives are another form of integrated service developed in Munich (14% of services in 2002). The educational benefit of this type of childcare, which provides places for 0 to 6-year-olds, is that it offers parents the prospect of a long term and stable form of childcare as well as an educational environment where different age groups are mixed together.

### *2.3 – Diversification of services and forms of welfare mix*

If we qualify the forms of service diversification within local welfare mix systems by combining the development of individual childcare and the emergence of a new generation of services, the cities included in the study can be divided into four categories:

(1) the cities of Sofia, Pleven, Sevlievo, Terrassa and Granada where the welfare mix is not particularly diversified from the services point of view. Individual childcare is only loosely regulated and the predominance of traditional services — crèches — leaves little room for new initiatives;

(2) the cities of Montreuil, Brussels-Schaerbeek and Monza where the welfare mix is characterized both by the emergence of new services and by the relatively minor development of official individual childcare;

(3) the Swedish cities of Stockholm and Östersund and Pesaro in Italy where service diversification that is limited — there is little individual childcare — but highly regulated, with parental cooperatives and social cooperatives;

(4) the cities of Munich, Frankfurt, Rennes and the English case study where service-based diversification of the welfare mix combines support for the creation of new services and regulation of widely available individual childcare.

## 3. Welfare Mix and Diversification of Providers

One of the hypothesis of the childcare welfare mix is that care of young children is no longer the exclusive responsibility of families or the local authorities, but of a multiplicity of actors who can intervene alternately in the same day or week. This diversity of providers is nothing new. But it certainly becomes more visible as formalized childcare services develop. In contrast to other areas of social or education policy where the public sector has traditionally played a structuring role as the direct provider of services, the childcare domain leaves the door open to cohabitation between the private, independent and not-for-profit sectors.

### *3.1- Tensions in municipal childcare services: slowdown or revitalization via multi-service childcare*

Although municipal childcare and pre-school services for the over threes have continued to expand in several German, Spanish and English cities in the study, the development of the municipal childcare services for 0 to 3-year-olds shows a less consistent pattern. In countries where public childcare infrastructures remain inadequate, development policies (in Germany, Spain and the UK) appear to have been implemented or programmed for the years ahead. Conversely, countries where a more longstanding tradition of municipal crèches exists — Belgium, France and Sweden — are showing a slowdown in the growth rate of the public sector, or even a reduction in the case of Bulgaria. Compared to the seventies and eighties, investment in traditional crèches seems less appropriate due to the cost of running these types of services as well as their inability to respond to the new needs of parents: opening hours, family support, new educational methods. On a more general level, the tensions within municipal childcare

services should be positioned in a context where the functioning of the welfare state is being decentralized, resulting in powerful budgetary restraints on local councils as well as forms of local governance of social services that aim to increasingly dissociate service regulation functions from service provision functions.

In this context, several strategies for change can be identified. The first consists of adapting and regenerating the municipal services by creating multi-service structures within existing facilities (Monza and Montreuil), multi-age service cooperatives (Munich) or integrated services like the Early Excellence Centres. The second strategy consists of delegating or encouraging the creation of new services to third sector organizations, as seen in Pesaro, Monza and Montreuil. These two strategies are not incompatible, as demonstrated by the French and English examples.

### *3.2 – Mixed dynamics in the private for-profit sector*

Although the public and not-for-profit sectors are present in almost all the local childcare welfare mix systems, the same does not apply to private for-profit services. We can identify a clear division between the cities of Rennes, Montreuil, Munich, Frankfurt, Brussels-Schaerbeek, Ottignies-Louvain la neuve, Östersund, Pesaro and Sofia where private for-profit or commercial childcare services play a marginal, if not non-existent, role, and the cities of Terrassa, Granada, Monza, Cosenza and the English case study where the private sector accounts for a significant, if not dominant, share of childcare places.

With greatly varying contexts, the UK, Spain and, to a lesser extent, Italy are seeing the most significant growth in private for-profit initiatives. In both Granada and Terrassa, private crèches have been set up at the initiative of groups of workers or special needs educators. They provide a greater number of childcare places than the public crèches. The private childcare services have developed without any aid from the local authorities. Operating primarily on financial contributions from parents, these private initiatives are barely integrated in the local governance of childcare services. In this area the Spanish case studies correspond to the Italian case studies. In Pesaro, Monza and Cosenza, subsidizing private crèches remains problematic for the local authorities, despite greatly varying local childcare policies.

The integration of private sector services into local childcare regulation is the factor that distinguishes the English case study from the Spanish and Italian examples. In the areas of the city studied, it is the private day nurseries that currently offer the greatest number of childcare places. Furthermore, the private for-profit sector has the same status as the public and not-for-profit sectors as a stakeholder in the local partnership for developing childcare services (EYCD). This gives it access to the different funds provided by the central government for creating new services.

The growth of the private sector in the UK can be seen against the historical background of a lack of childcare places for young children, which has forced parents and working mothers to turn to private childcare services. The conservative government's policy of creating semi-markets via a system of cheques and tax credits in the nineties encouraged this mixed service economy. It is interesting to compare the English context to the Swedish. In Stockholm, the private for-profit sector only represents 5% of the non-municipal services. Even though Swedish legislation dropped the prohibition on allowing private providers access to public funding in 1991, development of the private for-profit sector has not taken off. The quantity and quality of municipal and cooperative childcare services have no doubt limited the expansion of for-profit private services. In the case studies we can see that the lack of development of the for-profit sector is due to the existence of a wide range of public and not-for-profit services as much as to the ideological misgivings of local councillors who tend to lean to the left (Frankfurt, Munich, Rennes, Montreuil and Pesaro).

### *3.3 – The increasing and innovative role of the third sector*

Several case studies underline the fact that third sector initiatives — parental cooperatives and initiatives, and associations — are playing an increasing and innovatory role in childcare. In Frankfurt, Stockholm, Brussels-Schaerbeek, Rennes, Montreuil and Pesaro, the growth and revitalization of the local childcare services are primarily linked to the growth of associations and cooperatives. In the UK, the third sector continues to occupy an important place, even though the number of playgroups is dropping.

In some countries a longstanding tradition of third sector intervention in childcare services exists. In Germany and Belgium, many traditional services — crèches and kindergartens — have been handed over to denominational associations in line with the principle of subsidiarity. In terms of objectives and funding and operating mechanisms, they do no differ greatly from municipal childcare services. This growing presence of the third sector is also seen in the UK, where the differences in the status of private, community and voluntary day nurseries do not appear to influence the contents of the service.

However, the third sector is proving to be particularly innovative in *the emergence of new services* that respond to social cohesion issues: rurally-based services (travelling "halte-garderies" in Ille-et-Vilaine), parental initiatives (Frankfurt, Rennes, Montreuil, Stockholm and Östersund), childcare and support for immigrant families (multi-cultural crèches in Monza, a *halte-jeu* in Montreuil), childcare for children whose parents are undergoing reintegration into employment (*Maison ouverte* in Brussels-Schaerbeek), flexible and occasional childcare (micro-crèches in Pesaro and Montreuil, a *halte-accueil* in Brussels-Schaerbeek), out-of-school childcare (Brussels-Schaerbeek and Ottignies-Louvain la neuve), professionalization of childminders (Rennes, Montreuil, Monza and the English case study), childcare with atypical opening hours (Rennes) and multi-services structures (Brussels-Schaerbeek).

*Factors in third sector development*

Several factors can be advanced to explain the dynamism of the third sector. An initial factor relates to *the lower operating costs of cooperatives and associations compared* to the public sector. If cities such as Pesaro decide to hand over the running of crèches or new childcare services to social cooperatives, it is mainly due to the lower salaries and greater flexibility in managing personnel. In these cases, the risk lies in the third sector organizations being seen simply as local authority sub-contractors.

A second factor concerns *the lack of places* in a neighbourhood. For example, the growth of parental cooperatives in Sweden, parental initiatives in Germany and associative childcare in France during the eighties can be explained by their organizational and educational innovations as much as by the lack of local public services.

However, in most cases, third sector organizations innovate and propose services with different qualities from the municipal services. As shown by the Swedish example, the excess of places in the nineties that followed the shortage in the eighties brought about the closure of municipal crèches rather than parental cooperatives. The growth of the third sector is also due to *its ability to anticipate* families new requirements *and offer special services that respond to them* with initiatives such as flexible opening hours, parenthood support, the fight against exclusion, and the development of new educational methods. Where municipal services tend to integrate, not without tensions with childcare workers, the new goals into their selection and organization methods, third sector organizations tend to offer services that more closely target specific problems and families. The increasing complexity of the objectives of childcare service policies therefore provides a favourable framework for the development of the third sector. It may well prove to be more beneficial to support the creation of new services in the third sector rather than try to reform traditional municipal services.

## 4 - Diversification of Services and Local Childcare Regulations

The emergence of new services and the coexistence of several types of actors make the childcare regulatory mechanisms more complex. The new childcare services highlight the new goals, require new funding methods, and introduce new quality standards as well as new organizational methods which integrate or coexist with existing regulation mechanisms. This is why it seems reasonable to use the term *mixed governance of childcare* (Evers, Riedel), which links the elements of hierarchical regulation prevalent in the municipal management of traditional services to elements of more cooperative regulation and more market-based regulation. However, this mixed governance of the diversity of services may be integrated or fragmented to varying degrees depending on whether the new services and providers (a) are treated the same as or differently from traditional services and (b) whether their representatives are or are not considered as stakeholders in local regulation. As Adalbert Evers stresses (*Governing Diversity*), it would be simplistic to assign the new actors, notably in the third sector, a role as simple service providers when they actually have a decisive institutional role that is often more influential than their strict economic importance would imply. However, although we can observe an increasing recognition by the local authorities of the third sector's skills and innovations, *there remains strong resistance to making them partners in local regulation.*

Without attempting to create a typology, several developments and regulation mechanisms in the diversification of services and providers can be identified based on the case studies.

### *4.1 - Diversification through lack of regulation and of public childcare services*

This development in the diversification of childcare services is the result of a quantitative and qualitative shortage of childcare places. Faced with the lack of local childcare policies and/or the inadequacy of public services, private childcare services, both for-profit and not-for-profit, emerge and develop to meet the population's needs. Diversification therefore happens by default, with civil society initiatives emerging to fill the gaps left by municipal policies. When we refer to diversification by default, we mean the partial or total lack of recognition, funding and regulation of non-municipal childcare services. In this particular case, fragmentation corresponds to *a lack of governance* that springs from an absence of diversification policies, both in terms of the regulation of individual childcare, which remains largely informal, and of the promotion of new initiatives differing from traditional crèches.

This development in the diversification process can be traced to the history of the cities selected for the study. In Frankfurt, while the movement for parental initiatives dates from the late sixties, it is only since the end of the eighties that the local council has been providing them with durable and formalized support. In Sweden, the emergence of parental cooperatives in the eighties responded both to the shortage of places in municipal crèches and the wish for alternative educational approaches that increased parental involvement. In Rennes and Montreuil, the municipal policy was for many years focused on the creation and management of municipal crèches, only recognizing at a later stage the development of associative services — parental crèches and *halte-jeu* — which sped up in the eighties. In the cities of Granada, Terrassa, Monza and Consenza, the growth in private crèches generally happened without aid from the public authorities. In these four cities, there is almost no relationship between the public sector and private for-profit sector, which have developed separately. Since these cases concern traditional services that primarily meet the childcare needs of working parents, we could propose the hypothesis that it is essentially the rarity or inadequacy of municipal services that explains the growth of the private for-profit services. In Bulgaria, the emergence of commercial private services is governed by strong regulations, but with no aid or stimulation from the government. It represents a response to the changeover to a market economy — pre-1990 the private and formalized services did not exist — as well as to the demand for improved

quality and diversity of services. Only a well-to-do minority can afford the private services, even though the desire for the personalized care of the under threes seems to be shared by an increasing number of parents.

### *4.2 – Project-based regulation*

A second mechanism for regulating the diversification of services and stakeholders is *support for innovation and experimentation*. This involves the public/third sector partners occasionally organizing themselves around the creation of a new service without giving rise to any structural cooperation. In Italy, law 285/97 encourages the creation of new services, leaving regions and cities a great deal of room to manoeuvre in terms of the type of services and their implementation, as illustrated by the differences between the Italian case studies. This can produce joint projects between town councils and the third sector, as in Monza. This type of project-based regulation is often conducive to more cooperative and partnership-based forms of regulation. This type of regulation is limited by the long term viability of third sector initiatives, either because they only benefit from aid during start-up, or because they have access to a diversity of public funding not always directly linked to the childcare domain (Brussels-Schaerbeek). The challenge is identifying to what extent these cooperative actions affect the rules of local governance on a long term basis or whether they remain on the periphery.

### *4.3 – Fragmented state regulation of the diversification of services*

A third mechanism of new services regulation corresponds to *fragmented state regulation*, in the sense that new services and new actors are gradually subject to specific coordination and funding methods within the context of the local childcare policy. But although this involves a more long term integration into childcare objectives, funding modalities and regulations of non-municipal actors and services, notably from the third sector, their representatives are still not part of the local decision-making and coordination authorities. The influence of third sector organizations within the childcare welfare mix is therefore real and their activities are recognized, but indirectly and informally. The local childcare systems in Rennes, Montreuil and Stockholm are close to this form of state regulation where the recognition of the third sector in the funding regulations and national and local quality criteria does not necessarily result in local cooperation between the public and not-for-profit sectors. Although the management of childcare services is open to third sector organizations, the political and financial regulation of childcare welfare mix systems remains the prerogative of the local authorities.

The compartmentalization of local regulations governing collective and individual childcare in France provides a good illustration of the fragmentation of regulation mechanisms. However, it can also apply to the different collective childcare services, as demonstrated by the Brussels-Schaerbeek example. The Belgian case studies indicate a clear division between a sector subsidized by the ONE (Belgian Birth and Childhood Office), mainly traditional crèches, and a non-subsidized sector consisting of more innovative childcare services. The latter are obliged to seek out funding from a multitude of public policy domains other than childcare: employment, the fight against exclusion, social urban development. This fragmentation of the regulation of the Brussels-Schaerbeek local childcare system is even more marked by the fact that alongside the subsidized and non-subsidized sectors, the regulation of extracurricular has been delegated to a network of associations — the childhood coordination network — which runs on cooperative lines.

### *4.4 – Towards a mixed governance of the diversification of services?*

The final scenario corresponds to a diversification policy that *aims for the more egalitarian treatment of municipal and non-municipal services within regulation and funding mechanisms.* A number of case studies provide examples of a policy for the diversification of services which does not on principle favour any specific type of management.

The Swedish case studies illustrate the gradual integration of parental cooperatives into a universalist system which succeeded in modifying itself while limiting the effects of competition and cooperation between childcare services. In areas of Stockholm and Östersund, the differences in the resources allocated to the municipal and non-municipal services are minor and correspond to administrative costs. The other side to this universal access to public funding is that the public, cooperative and private crèches are subject to quality standards and assessment procedures that are very similar. This marked integration of non-municipal childcare services into primarily state-based regulation produces low mixed forms of regulation.

It is possibly in the English and German cities that we find, under very different configurations, the most advanced elements of mixed governance. In these cases, the third sector organizations are considered more as *local authority partners in the building up and management of local childcare policies*.

The English case study provides an example of local childcare policy that uses an original approach to combine elements of state regulation with elements of commercial and cooperative regulation. The actions of the actors and local childcare institutions do remain significantly restricted by the central government's injunction to create and finance new services in deprived areas. However, these objectives, targeted at specific sections of the public, have to be accomplished within the framework of local partnerships (EYDCP) open to actors from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. Nevertheless, the opportunities offered by this cooperative framework remain restricted by funding mechanisms for new services based on invitations to tender that introduce competition between the different childcare services. Mixed governance in the UK generally results in relatively high contributions from parents, a dual-level public system for subsidizing supply and demand, and the comparatively strong presence of the private sector.

In Frankfurt, on the other hand, the local childcare system has been born of a history of conflict and then cooperation between councillors, the municipal services and the parental initiatives movement. The ability of parental initiatives to organize themselves into networks in order to gain recognition for their specific way of functioning and be considered as having a relationship with the local authorities has produced the "partnership culture" that characterizes local governance in Frankfurt. However, it would be unwise to exclude the possibility that institutionalization can lead to the gradual standardization of parental initiatives within local policies, leaving the way open to regulation mechanisms that are more competitive, such as the introduction of invitations to tender for the creation of new services for 3 to 5-year olds.

## 5. Conclusion

The TSFEPS case studies confirm that the question of the diversification of childcare services is one of the main priorities of local childcare institutions. Policies aiming at exclusively family childcare, exclusively individual childcare or exclusively collective childcare are no longer adapted to suit the new challenges of the social cohesion of families and their members in their relationship to society: children's issues of socialization and education, and parents' issues of their relationship to the labour market, the distribution of family roles, and social participation.

It would be a little too premature to see the diversification of childcare services as an inevitable consequence of the process of individualization affecting European democracies, which set great store by defending the plurality of life style choices. The development of pre-school childcare for the over threes provides a more complex image by demonstrating that the processes of uniformizing and universalizing childcare are also at work within local childcare systems.

The effect of the diversification process that is at the heart of local childcare welfare mix systems on social cohesion is less clear than it may appear. It is in any case difficult to pass categorical judgement, since local childcare systems seem to be in a state of transition in many countries — Germany, the UK, Italy and Spain — with varying degrees of violence (Bulgaria) since the mid-nineties. Several case studies show that diversification is quite simply occurring hand-in-hand with a process of constructing national and local childcare policies that have remained in an embryonic state compared to traditional social policies.

However, several elements lead us to believe that, in the medium term, the advantages of a diversification policy for childcare services, even if fairly unregulated, will continue to gain in strength and overshadow the drawbacks:

(1) whilst the diversification of childcare services goes hand-in-hand with an increase in the number of childcare places, we can suppose that the possible negative effects of a fragmentation of the supply in terms of inequality of access, quality and participation will remain secondary in the eyes of the local authorities and populations. With the exception of Sweden, the urgent need to tackle the shortage of places to some extent relegates the question of the governance of diversity to a role of secondary importance;

(2) furthermore, the creation of new services and the emergence of new providers offers the twin advantage of continuing to meet the traditional objectives of childcare (reconciling professional and family life, providing children with early years development and socialization) while taking into account the new goals of social insertion, parenthood support and flexibility;

(3) diversification also appears to be a relatively cost-effective solution in view of the budgetary restraints of local governments. Until European societies have decided that investing in childcare for 0 to 3-year-olds is a strategic development and solidarity-based issue, as they appear to do for the 3 to 6-year old age group, there will always be the risk that the economic considerations of diversification are given more importance than social considerations.

Nonetheless, the expected effects of an unregulated diversification policy on social cohesion could well reach their limits more quickly than thought likely. The TSFEPS case studies are useful precisely in underlining that the increasingly complexity of local childcare welfare mix systems also generate social tensions that make governance of the new diversity essential. The diversification of childcare objectives produces tensions in the arbitration and management of priorities relating to the overall system and the services, revealing new social issues. We could even advance the hypothesis that the rhetoric of social cohesion also leads to a lack of regulation of the diversification of childcare objectives and services. The second section of this report will analyze the consequences of this diversification process on different aspects of social cohesion: access to childcare services, the quality of services, and the participation and informing of users.

## 2ND Part : LOCAL CHILDCARE SYSTEMS AND SOCIAL COHESION

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Social cohesion has traditionally been a basic issue in social sciences[7]. At the same time, the concept of social cohesion has always been a keyword in politics, and has been and is used within various policy fields (family policies, social integration, ethnic integration, etc.) and from different political approaches. It can therefore be a rather ambiguous and controversial concept. It can in fact entail a conservative approach, aimed at maintaining and preserving the existing social order unchanged. It can also be used from a progressive point of view, aiming at the emancipation of disadvantaged categories (equal opportunities, social insertion, etc). With the process of European unification, the concept of social cohesion has gained another meaning, that of tackling socio-economic inequalities among European countries and regions (see the program of the EU DG III "Social Cohesion"[8]).

Yet, it continues to be treated with different degrees of priority according to the historical and political moments, as well as to be declined very differently in different contexts. Summing up the elements analysed in the different parts of this comparative report; we can roughly identify at least two groups in the TSFEPS countries, relating to the weight of this issue in the internal debates. In a first group of countries (Sweden, France, Belgium, United Kingdom and Bulgaria), social cohesion is more explicitly present on the agenda of childcare systems, even if stemming from different patterns. Here childcare is seen as a means of social inclusion and – as a consequence – of social cohesion[9]. In a second group of TSFEPS countries (Italy, Spain and Germany), social cohesion is not an explicit aim of childcare, even though it is observable at a secondary level[10].

---

[7] We only recall here Tönnies' analysis of social cohesion patterns specific to *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (1887); the *mechanic* and *organic solidarity* in Durkheim (1893); Marx's *class solidarity* (1867); Parsons' theories of *normative integration* (1951); Marshall's welfarist *social citizenship* (1950); the theories on *civil society* (Kymlicka, 1990); the theories of *social capital* (Coleman, 1988; Granovetter, 1985; Putnam, 1993); the political philosophy of *communitarianism* (Sandel; Walzer). Even traditional liberalism handles social cohesion, as a natural result of market transactions in *laissez faire* contexts, from Smith (1776) on.

[8] http://www.coe.int/T/E/Social_cohesion/.

[9] In **Sweden**, social cohesion has been pursued through decades of universalism in social policies, now facing new challenges, such as a rapidly growing presence of immigrants (Pestoff and Strandbrinck, 2003). In **France** collective childcare has historically been a tool to generalise equal rights, to enroll children early on in a citizenship path, and also to sustain a traditionally rather low birth rate (Fraisse and Bucolo, 2003). In **Belgium** social cohesion is pursued mostly through specific projects to integrate excluded groups, through special services of the Third Sector and a recent emphasis on conciliation of family and work (Lhuiller, 2003). In the **British** New Labour model, enlarging access to and raising the quality of childcare, especially in disadvantaged areas, allows parents to be included in the labour market, and at the same time to better form children for their own future labour market participation (Lewis and Novakowska, 2003). In **Bulgaria** the sharp economic and social crisis following the post-communist transition has put social cohesion heavily under pressure. The attempt to preserve equal opportunities to access childcare services seems a way to preserve social cohesion in front of major social changes (Dandolova *et al*, 2003).

[10] In **Germany**, social cohesion can be linked to inequalities in accessing services in a rather integrated society, and to new concerns of cultural pluralism and access of special ethnic groups (Evers and Riedel, 2003). In **Italy** social cohesion is not an explicit aim of childcare. However, there is some awareness among policy makers, service managers and workers that childcare services are in a good position to monitor and prevent the appearance and development of social problems at the micro level, and to encourage the development of spontaneous socialising practices (Mingione *et al*, 2003). In **Spain** the main objectives of childcare are pedagogical and educational. Only

### *1.1. A working definition of social cohesion*

In order to avoid misunderstandings and ambiguities, we have developed our research project on the basis of a working definition of social cohesion, as *the equilibrium of a mix of different interests belonging to different social actors and its ability to exercise a control over social inequalities among inhabitants, possibly reducing them, and to promote citizens' participation*[11].

In our perspective, then, social cohesion is given by three elements:

a) the capacity of the (local) system to produce a *control of social inequalities* and of their impacts, through the possibility for the families who want to, to have access to an early socialisation for their children in high quality care services, disregarding their family origins, and therefore their socio-economic background;
b) the possibility to *conciliate family and professional life*, which clearly implies a gender question of equal chances for mothers and fathers. With respect to this, we have to bear in mind the fact that women (mothers) have traditionally been asked a much greater care commitment within the family, and still now they are asked a bigger care contribution than men (fathers)[12]. Evidence from local cases tells us that things are changing (services observe that fathers are more and more involved in taking care of their children), but equality is still far from having been reached;
c) the dimension of the *participation into services' life and in the policy design*. Participation refers –, as we will see – to different degrees and involves different social actors, from the parents, to the extended family, to the services' workers up to the local community. Out of these three dimensions, participation is in a sense the least established. As a matter of fact, while the control of inequalities is at least an issue at stake in social democracies, and gender equality and conciliation has the market as a big supporter, participation is a rather recent issue, which does not receive the same degree of attention everywhere.

These three elements, different but interrelated, are not goals in themselves, but they rather aim at maintaining and improving the level of life quality and of social cohesion in each social context. Major tensions are observed, as far as – due to the contemporary transformations of family structures and of the labour market – the local systems of childcare services are increasingly facing non standardized needs to which they are seldom able to answer. The new needs concern, among others, the organisation of times and shifts and the flexibility of provision, the pedagogical approach, the ethnic integration, the openness to the territory (Evers and Riedel, *infra*).

---

recently has the promotion of the conciliation between family and professional life started to become an aim of childcare, with the integration of disabled children.

[11] Such a working definition is coherent with some official EU documents: "Social cohesion relates to the degree to which individuals and groups within a particular society are bound by common feeling of consensus, share common values and goals and relate to one another on a co-operative basis. In the promotion of social cohesion the following core concerns are: a) the extent of inequalities in terms of income, health and others living conditions as it affects different groups for example, older people, children, women, migrants, long term unemployed, people with disabilities, etc.; b) the effective reduction of the inequalities through the formal systems of social protection, education and health and; c) the trends in social participation; i.e. development in the extent to which citizens contribute more directly to the construction and consolidation of social cohesion through their participation in economic, political and social life" (Eurostat, 2001).

[12] The literature has highlighted very well the role of women's care work in the Fordist (and also in the post-Fordist) period as a contribution to social production and reproduction as important and legitimate as the one of the (male) breadwinners. It is the well-known concept of women's *double shift*, which points to their double commitment inside and outside the house (Balbo, 1978; Pateman, 1989; Lewis, 1993).

Within every national and every local system, a very differentiated mosaic of solutions can be observed; childcare policies aim at increasing the systems' ability to solve both inequalities and conciliation problems. Nowhere has the question been solved once and for all, and with a homogeneous pattern for the whole citizenship. In every local context social actors combine different available resources, often depending on their socio-economic background, in order to solve their conciliation needs. Some strategies are more complex than others and some (not necessarily the least complex) are more efficient and less resource consuming. In some contexts the overview of available resources is clearer than in others, and public institutions are more present in some contexts than in others.

### *1.2. The empirical indicators of social cohesion*

The three elements sketched above still needed to be operationalised, identifying some indicators that could be empirically investigated in our research. Thus we translated them in the following empirical indicators:

- **access** to childcare services[13], which relates to:
  - ✓ inequalities regarding class, ethnicity or other households' social characteristics;
  - ✓ gender inequalities, as it structures women's possibility to work;
- **quality** of childcare, which relates again to social inequalities, as quality might differ according to services' types and sectors, which in turn might be segmented in their access patterns;
- **participation** to the services' management, which relates to the role of the social actors and their contribution in building and reinforcing social cohesion; a gender equality dimension is addressed through the indicator of participation, too (do mothers and fathers equally participate?).

We will go through them in this order even if cross references will be made, as they are linked to one another.

[13] We refer here mainly to services targeted to children under 3 years of age. Even if in some of the TSFEPS countries this division is not as meaningful (Sweden) or rather the 3-6 as well as the "pre-scolaire" for the over 6 is as much at stake (Germany and Belgium).

## 2. Access and social cohesion

Our analysis concerned primarily access to collective *crèches* and, to a lesser extent, to "new generation services" and to individual care (childminders).

Being able to access collective childcare services without long queuing and paying affordable tuition fees is a matter of social cohesion. This is due to the fact that it affects the relation between women and the labour market and equal opportunities of women, the relation among different social classes, the relation among different generations and equal opportunities of children. The social cohesion issue is declined here in some dimensions concerning access, which are presented in the following paragraphs: lack of services, eligibility; affordability; equal chances for all children.

We will try to summarise the main lines of tensions occurring in cities involved in the project (for a deeper analysis see Lhuiller, *infra*), and the main differences with respect to those issues. In particular we will firstly see the tensions related to a restricted access, then to the eligibility criteria and the affordability of services; geographic inequalities will be analysed as well. Finally we will see the tensions related to the timetable access of collective *crèches* both for those who use the services and for those who work in them.

### *2.1. The lack of services*

Among all the cities involved in the research, it is only the Swedish cities and the city of Pesaro, located in the centre of Italy, which are not affected by the problem of restricted access and of scanty of services[14]. These three cities have indeed a number of facilities, mainly public ones, which completely satisfy the demand of citizens. As this report explains in other sections, the Swedish case studies and Pesaro, despite the very different national and institutional contexts, present many similarities (Andreotti and Sabatinelli, *infra*). Though, the gap between the degree of coverage shows very clearly that they belong to two different models of welfare systems. In the Swedish cities the number of children enrolled reaches 90% (for the under 6 years of age). In Pesaro such a high percentage only refers to the 3-5 age range, while babies under 3 attending *crèches* or other services (*Tempo Famiglie*, micro-*crèches*) are about 30%, pointing at a much lower degree of defamilisation than in the Swedish cases.

In all other cities, and countries more in general, which are facing a growing demand, the lack of public childcare services, but also private for profit, and not for profit, is at stake. In almost all cities involved in the research project with the exemption of Cosenza in the South of Italy, local municipalities pay a great deal of attention to this issue, trying to increase the number of available places. This seems much more evident in the UK than elsewhere, due to the priority and the money given by the central government[15].

Still, the need to increase the number of available places and therefore the necessity to also increase the budget for childcare services is in tension, almost everywhere, with the tendency to cut local public budgets, often in economic deficit. This double tendency, which has lasted at least a decade, turned into a modification of the local welfare mix of the different cities as well as in different kinds of services as far as the childcare is concerned. The local system has

[14] Also in Bulgaria waiting lists are rare for services for the 0-3 years, but as we do not have any data on the percentage of children covered, a comparison with the Swedish and the Pesaro cases seems a bit hazardous.

[15] The main aim of this big campaign in favor of childcare services is to combat social exclusion through high quality childcare. One of the aims is also to increase women's employment, even if mothers are not compelled to accept a job offer until their children are 16 year old.

actually become more articulated – with the development and the increasing importance of the third sector associations, co-operatives, for profit entrepreneurs, company crèches, and new forms of partnership between private and public local actors – but still insufficient to cover the gap between demand and supply. This diversification raises at least two risks at the local political level: 1) possible fragmentation; 2) a budget-driven approach.

*Risks of fragmentation*

Our case studies confirm the trend which is leading to the diversification of the childcare services and providers. This diversification is seen more and more by local managers of childcare as a need and a strategy in order to answer to the diversification of the ways of family life and to the flexibility of the job market.

*But is this process of diversification favourable or not to the strengthening of social cohesion?* The analysis of the case studies does not give a simple answer. Often presented as a solution, diversification, especially if it is not regulated, can turn out to be problematic in some cases. It can also be a synonim of the fragmentation of the supply and of the social polarization of childcare services. It leads to more complications for parents who have a weak legibility of local offer and continue to choose their way of childcare by default. Due to the absence of regulations concerning the supply and of the accompanying of parents' demand, diversification can also turn out to be a generator of inequalities both from the point of view of access to the service and of the quality of childcare or of the work conditions of the professionals.

*Budget approach*

The process of diversification in all countries means also an increase of the degree of cover of services for children. However, does this process of diversification reflect a policy of social cohesion that wants to answer fairly to the diversity of the parents' needs or does it mainly go back to a policy of increase of the number of places at a lower cost? The support on new services and private providers may hide a purely quantitative and budgetary approach whereby any creation of a service of childcare for children is to be considered as progress. Within such an approach, it would not be important that these places are in a public or private structure, in an individual or collective service, what is important is to face the defecit in structures of the supply, to face the ever increasing pressure of parents/voters always bearing in mind of the limits of public finances. Resorting to tenders for contracts (the British and German cases), which put in competition among each other public providers, privates for profit and not for profit is in any case a sign of a search for the most efficient and less expensive solution.

These are some effects of the lack of services at the local political level. Though, what are the effects on households and on their children, and how do they relate to social cohesion?

### *2.2. Eligibility to public services*

Policies always imply a *selection of aims and goals*, even more so in a situation of scant resources as the one of childcare. The lack of available public places obviously means that not all people who would like to use the services are able to do so. As a matter of fact childcare services are almost everywhere considered services "on demand", and not universal. Therefore there is not a right to have a place in childcare services, except in Sweden. In all the other countries public services are hence obliged to fix some eligibility criteria to select households[16].

[16] In Bulgaria selective criteria has existed since the socialist period as a form of positive discrimination, but in practice they are rarely used today as the balance between offer and demand is relatively good.

Private services (both for and not for profit) are different. Here no criterion is fixed, as their logic is: first come, first served, unless they work in agreement with the public administrations. The main criterion of selection is therefore families' affordability.

Let's then concentrate on the selective criteria of *public* services: a) employment; b) residence in the city and in the neighborhood; c) income threshold; d) special cases.

*The employment criterion*

The common trend in all countries is to give priority to the households' types that have the most serious conciliation problems: double worker families and working lone parents[17].

In some countries, if one or both parents are not working, parents cannot even submit their application (Belgium), in some others they are theoretically eligible, but the scores they obtain in the ranking are so low that they usually have no hope to accede (France, Italy). Bulgaria is an exception, as here children of unemployed not only accede, but also free of charge. The employment criterion creates a sort of vicious cycle. Indeed, parents who are actively seeking a job would equally need a place where to leave their babies because the search is very time consuming (almost as a job). Considering that the unemployed is usually the woman, this creates problems of gender equal opportunities. In some cities, but not in all of them, this risk is avoided by the practice of accepting children for a limited period of time, while parents are searching for the job. If they are still unemployed after a certain period (e.g. three months), they lose their right to accede the service. Still, this does not help the most fragile ones (long-term unemployed, low qualified unemployed) who need more time to re-enter the guaranteed formal sector of the labour market. The European and national calls for an increase of the activity rates (especially women's) would need more support by services, including childcare services, which play a major role for unemployed with very young children. This is especially true in those countries where no economic support is available for those who – even as a second and obliged choice – choose to take care themselves of their children as they are unemployed or have a low level job (as it's the case instead of the "APE – Allocation Parentale d'Education", in France).

*The residence criterion*

The residence criterion means that households can apply only for the collective crèche in the area where they are living (Belgium, France, Spain, and Italy). This raises some important tensions in respect of the localization of services. As a matter of fact, the territorial widespread of public collective crèches within the city becomes crucial. For instance, if all services are concentrated in the central and more affluent areas, households living in the outskirts are clearly disadvantaged. Our case studies seem to go exactly in this direction. In fact, with the exception of the British case, the inhabitants in the city centres have more choices of childcare services and of providers at their disposal. This is the case in Rennes, where an important network of municipal crèches has been built but which lacks in the outskirts and in the rural communities. In Stockholm, Munich and Frankfurt the growth of non-municipal crèches, in particular as a result of parents' initiatives has been rather spectacular in the city centre areas. The same can be said for Monza for private crèches. In Bulgaria, the appearance of private childcare services are concentrated in Sofia. Only the British case seems to have had a different evolution due to the

[17] The case of lone parents is particularly illustrative. They are the priority targets of childcare services for the very specific reason that they present the hardest conciliation difficulties as they cumulate in one person all the parental and bread-winning functions. If in the Fordist model these functions were rigidly divided between two people of different gender, in the post-Fordist model they are a little more shared between them in double-earner-couples, through a wide scope of possible arrangements ("parental shifts", externalisation of care, involvement of grandparents or other relatives, combination of these elements). Lone parents – especially when the non-cohabiting partner does not fulfil his parental duties – cannot count on an alternative parental presence and can rarely afford childcare at market prices, as they can only count on a single income, if any. The informal and family networks can also be deprived after a separation, if this was really hard.

fact that the central government has created, through the new local partners (EYDCD), a policy of initiative for the creation of new services in the urban areas in difficulty.

*The income criterion*

The income criterion implies that, among households living in the area, a priority is given to those with a lower income. In this way a form of vertical equity is assured.

The lack of public places and the income threshold established in certain countries to accede imply the risk that public services become stigmatized, as only or mainly children coming from a relatively poor socio-economic background can accede. In this sense public services can become less attractive for high-middle classes who prefer not to send their children to a public structure but to use alternative solutions such as childminders, where tax reductions or economic supports are foreseen for this as in France, or grand-parents as in Italy or Spain. This risk of a too pronounced social homogeneity of families using crèches is strongly debated in some countries (e.g. in France), where the preservation of a certain degree of social mix is one of the main criteria in the management of admissions to public crèches. In other countries or local contexts, the deservedness of low-income households remains the priority criteria and is not mitigated by social mix concerns.

*Special cases*

In almost all our case studies criteria are foreseen in order to privilege disadvantaged categories in the selection. We have already seen the case of lone parent households. Large households have a higher eligibility score, too, due to the presence of several siblings. Priority is acknowledged as well to children coming from socially disadvantaged families, generally certified by a recommendation from social services that already have them in care. Children with disabilities represent in some contexts a new challenge. The common trend seems to be the integration of special users into normal structures, even if these are not always provided with the necessary resources to adequately treat them (Lhuiller, *infra*).

*"New generation" services*

The data that we have for the "new generation" services does not give us the possibility to make precise observations on the issue and we can only rely on the interviews to policy makers. These services are aimed at families whose children do not go to a public or private crèche (either because they have not been enrolled, or because they have not been accepted), but who wish that, in any case, their children attend a place where they can do activities more or less structured, with other children and in the presence of expert adults. These services do not have selective criteria in general and have a less strict organisation limitations (for example with respect to the attending hours) than traditional crèches. Users are mainly middle class families whith a medium-high school qualification and this, does not help to lower the reproductions of inequalities (see later on).

### *2.3. Affordability*

The income threshold for accessing public collective crèches clearly concerns social cohesion between different social classes. In some of the selected cities of our project (mainly the South European ones), middle-class households are indeed often excluded from public collective crèches. This is due to the fact that their family income is higher than the threshold, but, at the same time, the income be not high enough to pay a full time child minder for the whole week, or to pay a private crèche. This tension is particularly evident in some cities in Northern Italy and in Spain and a little less in Belgium and France, where child minders are more affordable for

middle classes thanks to public support on both the demand and supply side[18]. This often means that the income of a low-middle class woman is almost entirely devoted to pay either the private crèche or a child minder. This creates a problem of social cohesion between the different *social classes,* with the low-middle class facing the following choice. Is it more convenient for the mother to stop working for the first three years after the birth of the child or to keep her job (with the career opportunities and the advantages of a stable job contract), and to devote almost the entire salary of that period to child care? In both cases the household's income is severely cut.

In the Southern European contexts, a great support in the daily care of children still comes from the grandparents, who represent the most convenient solution from a financial point of view.[19] The extended family represents a great source of support in all case studies, even if at different degrees. Indeed, in Italy or Spain grandparents often look after their young grandchildren for the whole week for 8 hours a day. In Bulgaria grandparents can even access the maternity paid leave instead of the parents if these are working; it is a rather common practice when the mother has a well-paid job. In other contexts the support is not regular and continuous and is given mainly during the weekend. The important role of grandparents is however contradictory. On the one hand, it can represent a link between different generations and create solidarity, on the other it can become problematic as the relationship between parents and grandparents can become unbalanced and tensions can arise on the education style to be adopted. Clearly enough, this can represent another challenge in terms of social cohesion between generations. Moreover, grandparents are a resource not equally available to all. The availability of grandparents depends on a number of factors, such as their age, health conditions, geographical proximity, working condition, and also more subjective elements, such as the state of the relationship between parents and grandparents, their agreement on how to raise children, etc.

A second tension strictly related to this system, where grandparents play a major role as care givers, is the future non-sustainability of this model. Women are increasingly involved in the labour market and are "less" housewives than their mothers used to be. They will probably have to work for longer periods than in the past due to the increasing expectancy of life and the difficulty of the pension system in every country. As a result they will not be able to take care of their grandchildren, especially in the first years that are the most problematic with regards to childcare service availability. This means that also in the South European countries, where female employment started to increase later than in the rest of Europe, the need for childcare services targeted to children under 3 will greatly increase.

### *2.4. Equal opportunities for all children*

The other tension implied by a poor childcare system (in particular a poor collective care system) concerns the psycho-social development of children regardless of the social origins. Some empirical studies (Broberg *et. al*, 1989; Andersson, 1992; Oecd, 2001, 2002a and 2002b; Gunnarsson, Korpi, Nordenstam, 1999; Esping Andersen and Mestres, 2003) underline how important an early access to a collective care and pre-education system is, even before the second year of life. Broberg's research in particular, carried out on a longitudinal sample of Swedish children, highlights that children attending collective care systems (as crèches or the

[18] *AFEAMA (Allocation familiale pour l'emploi d'une assistante maternelle agrée*) and contribution of the *Caisse d'Allocation Familiale* for the start up and the functioning of individual childcare services. Anyway in France there remains a disparity between the financing of the collective and of the individual care. While the costs of municipal and not municipal crèches respect a national bareme that takes into consideration the income of parents, the recours to a child minder is often unfeasable for families with a modest income who cannot take advantage of tax reductions, which are more favourable for people with a high income.

[19] Though in this case care by grandparents is not a free choice but an obligation due to an economic problem.

so-called new generation services, as the Italian *Tempo Famiglie*) between the 6th and the 12th month of their life, have much better results at primary school in the development and learning tests with respect to their mates who have been cared for exclusively within the family[20]. How can such results be explained? According to these researches, thanks to universal early childcare services, the unequal distribution of human capital among households is largely neutralised. As Esping Andersen and Mestres (2003) state, the cognitive stimulation does not rely anymore only on parents (family), but also on the collective services (of any kind: public or associative; crèches or micro-crèches; etc), which do not reproduce – at least not completely – the differences between social classes. Intensive childcare programs, intervening early and promoting high pedagogical levels[21] contribute to an increase in the cognitive performance of children coming from difficult contexts (Zaouche-Gaudron *et al*, 2004). As a matter of fact, children manage to reach a more equal position at the moment of acceding formal compulsory school, with lower probability that school performance is related to the socio-economic and cultural conditions of one's family (see Andreotti and Benassi, 2003). These studies highlight, however, that collective crèches have to be supported by a favourable policy of parental leave so that the children can take advantage of a balanced mix between collective structures of socialisation/education and parental care.

As earlier stated, the low-middle class families, and therefore their children, seem to be in a underprivileged position in this regard: they earn too much to access a public service, but not enough to afford a private one, unless they decide to devote one salary to that.

With the exception of Bulgaria, children of the unemployed are, in turn, almost completely out of the system of collective care that they would particularly need instead. Empirical studies clearly show that the unemployed are more likely to have a poor socio-economic background and, then, a poor social capital (Duée, 2004; Burnay, 2004). Furthermore, the selective criteria sometimes exclude from the system of collective care children living in one-income households. Also in this case, empirical studies highlight that they are often low-income level households with a poor cultural background, represented by a low schooling level. The issue of social cohesion is here at stake from the point of view of the equality of children's learning chances and of their future cognitive development, and thus of the fight against social inequalities.

*As a conclusion it seems that in almost all our local cases access to different kinds of services (collective/individual, traditional/new generation, public / for profit / not for profit, etc.) depends a lot on predetermined paths which segment the demand through the criteria fixed by the supply (eligibility and priority criteria, costs of services, targeted economic support, etc.). This segmentation limits families' freedom to choose the childcare mode they prefer, instead of enlarging it. Indeed, families do not always have all the necessary pieces of information in order to choose consciously. Above all such a discourse could favor a greater social polarization, whereas the public services will be even more than now addressed only to those households that cannot buy childcare at market prices. This would have negative effects on social cohesion, as the experience of the social mix promotes attitudes favorable to social integration both in children and in their families. Still, the possibility to choose the* type *of*

[20] Similar outcomes on the performances of children who attend collective care services are also reported in researches carried out in France (Jeantheau, Murat, 1998), even though the findings are more controversial, and the pedagogical debate on the importance of keeping the baby at home at least until one year of age is still very much open also in other countries (Belgium, Italy). Moreover, early socialisation might also mean in some cases early labelling in other words, early childcare services would sometimes create paths of learning inequality and disease even earlier than school itself (Duru-Bellat, 2002; Kherroubi, 2004).

[21] In order to guarantee positive long term effects on the development of children, collective services must not represent a parking for children or having just a "looking after" or medical approach. On the contrary, they should give children positive cognitive inputs through high level pedagogical staff. Best practices in this sense are the Swedish services, but also those in Central Italy (the internationally known "Reggio Emilia school").

*childcare (that is the choice among day care in the family, in collective structures, in very small groups or even on a one to one relationship with a childminder, as well as between full time and part time care), which at present depends heavily on the structural conditions of supply, should be rendered wider, also through greater information on the existing supply and transparency on the criteria. This would entail a wider scope of conciliation patterns, and thus more chances to have a more equal distribution of opportunities (also concerning women employment).*

### *2.5. Opening time and access*

The increasing flexibility and spread of atypical jobs in the labour market has also meant an increasing flexibility and variability of the working hours. If we think of the extension of the opening hours of supermarkets and malls, where shops are open 12 or more hours a day, or of call centres, restaurants, or hospitals, it is quite clear that we can no longer refer to one typical working day as being of 8 hours from 8:00-9:00 a.m. to 5:00-6:00 p.m. This has important consequences for households where both parents are working, for their children and thus for the system of care as a whole. A divide emerges between households who have a possibility to resort to and articulate different ways of care in the same day or week and those who cannot. The limited opening hours and the weakness of care outside school hours within the context of lengthening and flexibility of working hours reinforce the social inequalities in childcare. In Germany and in the United Kingdom, where part-time care is important, this type of polarization is accentuated. For families whereby both parents work in full time and who have a high income, this adjustment is made through the payment for complementary private services outside school hours that they can afford. For families with a more modest income, this adjustment is mainly made by mothers who work part-time and through private informal arrangements.

The analysis carried out in this project highlights that in almost all cities the crèches and most of childcare services still reflect the traditional working day, being open from 8.00 a.m. up to 6 p.m. at the most. Children have to attend the service on a regular basis and parents have to choose from few patterns the time of entrance and exit of their children, which will remain the same for the whole year with little possibility of variation. The degree of rigidity varies according to the city as well as to each single service, but the overall principle is not put into question. The regularity of attendance and of the entrance and exit hours is, according to the educators, pedagogically legitimated: children need to have some moments during the day which fix the transition from one activity to another and – more importantly – the passage from family to community and the other way round.

However, given the flexibility of parents' working hours, this rule can clash with their needs. If parents work longer than 6 p.m., how can they manage to pick their children up? They necessarily need to pay for a child minder aggravating their family budget, or they have to rely on grandparents, or, more in general, on an informal support network which is not always available. The answer educators usually give to this problem is that very young children cannot stay too long in a collective service, as they need their parents or anyway a family atmosphere. They also say that when parents' needs do not match with children's needs, it is the latter who have to be privileged.

Though, if for instance a parent starts working in the afternoon up to 8 p.m., why should he/she bring the child at the crèche at 9 a.m.? If he/she could stay for the whole morning with it and bring it in the crèche only in the afternoon, would this not allow a better balance between the time passed within the family and the time passed in the collective structures? In fact, this kind of balance between good quality collective childcare and good quality family time is fundamental for an early serene development of children, each of these two elements not being sufficient by itself (Esping-Andersen and Mestrers, 2003).

In this delicate question, which concerns not only parents needs, but also what is better for the safety of the child, there is a third element which is important to bear in mind: the needs of educators and workers of the childcare services. Answering to parents' needs in terms of time flexibility also means modifying (increasing) the working time of educators and workers, and/or hiring new staff. This would also mean increasing services' costs, both for the management and for the users (families), in a moment in which – as already said – public administrations are facing sharp budget reductions. In parallel, it is also difficult to find a match among different and changing enter and exit times, from an organisational point of view, with the risk of having overcrowded and rather empty moments, both of which could undermine the serene development of pedagogic activities. In the long term this could become another question of social cohesion, that is to say a question of balance of different interests (parents', children's, service workers').

## 3. Quality and social cohesion

### *3.1. Quality versus quantity*

The major tension to be noticed is the one regarding quality issues versus quantity concerns, which sometimes ends up in a real trade off. It is not a tension specific to childcare; on the contrary it represents a major concern for all in-kind and personal social services. The gap – in some cases a huge gap – that exists between demand and supply urges public administration, at central and/or at local level, to widen their provision and – in some cases – also to stimulate other providers to do so (or at least not to contrast their initiatives to answer to market demands) in order to reduce the unsatisfied demand (Lhuiller, *infra*). This pressure on the need to create new available places can occur at the detriment of a rigid respect of quality standards. This happens because, generally speaking, quality is expensive and – as we have seen as almost the leitmotiv of this report – available resources for childcare services are insufficient everywhere – with the only exceptions of the Swedish cases and Pesaro. Thus, public financing entity has a direct impact both on the quality and on the quantity of the childcare supply.

In fact, the quality/quantity tension is almost everywhere much less acute regarding the 3 to 6 age range, for which a universal approach[22] was undertaken in many countries during the Seventies and Eighties. Even if this process is not fully implemented[23], the overview is still greatly different from the one regarding the < 3. This is partly related to the fact that the conceptualisation of the 3-6 as a fragile but cognitively fertile age has begun earlier. The under 3, on the one hand, still entail too many cultural taboos regarding the predominance of family over society in the children's needs and, on the other, collective structures for this age group are very expensive, and this slows down the widening of public offer although demand steadily increases.

Nevertheless, despite the budget constraints and the heavy pressures to favour quantity enlargement, childcare is still a policy area where attention to quality remains high, because of the inherent fragility of the interested age range. The tendency in the last decades has been

[22] This does not mean that all children are enrolled in publicly financed and managed structures, but that to ensure that a great majority of children accede kindergartens, the State has heavily invested, creating state structures, undertaking the management of former municipal structures and/or supporting private structures.

[23] In Italy, and even more so in Spain, areas with very high attendance rates push the average values upwards, but other areas are still insufficiently covered; in the UK the 3-4 age range is *currently* being covered; in Western Germany the 3-6 attendance had a recent increase and not at the same pace all over the country.

rather an enlargement of quality meanings, as long as the aims of childcare gradually moved from mere guardianship (guaranteeing safety and hygiene to children whose parents were working out of home) to a more pedagogical, socialising and pre-educational service.

One of the major concerns of families entrusting young children outside the family is the fact of not knowing whether the people caring for them are reliable. Of course, collective services assure at least an internal control and the support of a whole staff group to the single childcare worker, whereas the individual care is much more hazardous in this sense. Hence, high staff qualification remains a basic quality element in childcare to be protected and fostered; deregulation seems dangerous. Though, high childcare quality means first of all higher payment level and better working conditions for qualified childcare workers, who are currently very poorly paid all over the TSFEPS countries, especially with respect to the hard commitment and responsibility their profession requires. The diversification of providers is not particularly favourable to these requirements. In general, workers of the public services are better guaranteed than workers of private structures for profit or non-profit. Such a salary differential is in fact often the main factor explaining the difference of functioning costs between public and private services (Vidal and Claver, *infra*).

Neither quantity by itself (an enlargement of available childcare places of whatever quality) nor mere structural quality (assuring safety and hygiene) are enough to guarantee equal opportunities to all children (in a view of contrasting social inequalities; 3.3.5). In fact, if wide differences in the quality of care contents should still exist among different kinds of providers or of services, or among local contexts, any attempt of reducing social inequalities could be vain.

This would be even more a problem of equity if the quality of care content were linked to the economic expense of families for childcare. Up to now, such a link has not been that direct at all, because – as we have seen in most of the reports – public services, whose fees are income-related, are considered almost everywhere as the best ones, whereas the private for profit ones cover a wide range of quality levels. This preference for public services is also given by the fact that citizens hardly accept the idea that childcare of the very young can be a for profit activity.

### *3.2. Quality and diversification*

Does the diversity of providers favour childcare services' quality? It is not self-evident. In those contexts where the average quality level is high (most of all the quality level of public services, which generally represent a term of comparison for the other providers) and most of all where official controls are efficient, different providers may all have a good quality level as comparison and – where it exists – competition among for profit entrepreneurs push private structures to reach and maintain high standard levels. Though, the scant childcare supply generally allows relatively low quality level providers to be on the market, as the families' need to find a place is more urgent than the need to evaluate attentively the quality level of the provision. In other words, then, insufficient supply and low coverage of the demand represent a real barrier to quality development. This is all the more true since the shortage of formal childcare increases informal, unregulated, black market provision, which eludes any quality standard and control. Moreover, the official controls generally focus – as we have seen – more on structural elements, easier to measure and evaluate, than on the contents of care, which remain more evasive (Lewis and Nowakowska, *infra*).

*The analysis of Laurent Fraisse (1st part) suggests that the diversification of providers and services can be read as a way of solving the lack of consensus among different actors on a common definition of quality, allowing a plurality of local norms to co-exist. Such a plurality is also a result of the transition childcare policies are undergoing in all contexts.*

From the point of view of the regulation and governance systems, as Lewis and Nowakowska (*infra*) pointed out the reconciliation of top down and bottom up quality criteria seems to be

fundamental in order to have innovation and excellence in childcare services. Anyway, regulations by themselves are not enough if financial resources are inadequate to assure a suitable level of coverage, what threatens social cohesion as far as it makes it impossible to offer equal opportunities to children of all origins. In this sense the most serious worries are raised on the one hand by Bulgaria, because of the post-communist economic crisis[24], and on the other by Southern Italy and – to a lesser extent – Southern Spain, because of a long lasting development gap. Though, even in the countries which currently have an average childcare provision, the level of services is continuously threatened by repeated cuts to public financing, which make it difficult for local governments to maintain their in-kind services supply, not to mention enlarge it.

### *3.3. Integration as a feature of quality*

*An important feature of quality in childcare services is in our opinion the active pursuit of social and ethnic integration. Case studies analyses show us some best practices, both in public but most of all in Third Sector services. Indeed, many innovations aiming to increase social cohesion through social integration of disadvantaged categories have been developed within the associative environment (for instance* halte-jeux *and other services for immigrant households in Montreuil, Monza, Schaerbeek). In a context of steady immigration from non-EU countries, a threat to social cohesion might come from the fact that a typical reaction in case of scant resources is to claim a priority in access for natives as opposed to immigrants or minorities. Once again the demand-supply gap threatens social cohesion. The risk is to have services separated by social class and/or ethnic origin.*

## 4. Participation and social cohesion

In this paragraph, which aims to draw some elements of synthesis about the links between participation patterns and social cohesion, we would like to avoid the normative feature that could be attached to the concept. In other words, we will not take for granted that participation is *per sé something* positive and desirable. We will see that it can be characterised by different degrees of voluntarism, up to being compulsory, and it is not by default linked to better service performances, nor to higher social cohesion.

First of all, whose participation do we refer to? Our project touched the participation:

a) of parents to the childcare services' life and organisation;
b) of workers to the services' organisation;
c) of the services to the neighbourhood life;
d) of citizens and services to the local policy.

The participation of citizens and services to the local definition of childcare policy is related to the governance issue, therefore we refer to the first part of this chapter (§ 4).

### *4.1. Parents' participation*

Parents' participation is an emergent issue on the services' agenda (except in Bulgaria, where it has a long lasting tradition). It can be understood at different degrees (Pestoff and Strandbrink, *infra*), implying:

[24] Before 1989 private services did not exist and the quality of the public ones was really high. Nowadays there is a difference between the private and the public equipments, and some of the interviewed parents state that the quality level is higher in the private services (Lewis and Nowakowska, *infra*; Dandolova *et al*, 2003).

1. the simple payment of the official fee (mere "official" economic participation);
2. the voluntary provision of materials to widen children's activities (flour, old cloths..);
3. the presence and eventual active participation to sporadic events (parties, recites);
4. informative meetings and parents' representative committees;
5. the implication in various activities demanding time and work (ranging from looking after the children to taking on the accounting of the service or other);
6. the "compulsory" provision of extra fees, material and/or time and work;
7. a *real* decision-making power.

Patterns 1-4 are found in most public collective services, as well as for profit ones (although the second one at a lesser extent). The fifth pattern is typically found in the associative services such as the *crèches parentales* in France. The sixth pattern is a striking example from Bulgaria where, besides the other patterns, a wide extraordinary parents' participation is essential to maintain or increase the quality level and in some cases even for the mere survival of the public services, which would otherwise collapse due to the overall crisis of public structures shaken by the transition to the market economy. The last pattern is not evident anywhere, except, once again, the associative family structures.

A special mention should be made for *the participation of fathers*, steadily increasing in the last years, even if it is still much lower than the mothers' one. Some services have as one of their aims to favour the cohesion and prevent problems within the couple and to enhance the commitment of fathers. Therefore they insist particularly on the participation of both parents to meetings and parties, and even organise social events exclusively for fathers and children. Once again such examples come from Third Sector experiences.

*Parents' participation and quality perception*

Parents' participation has represented in childcare like in other services an element of innovation in the last years. The lack of any participation space is therefore nowadays seen as a negative feature, for two reasons linked one to the other. On the one side, in the so-called knowledge society, where the early achievement of cognitive development is more and more believed to be fundamental for further education and competence attainment, the parents' need to obtain information about the child development steadily increases. On the other hand, the entrusting of very young children can never be a complete delegation, because of the delicacy and potential of the age concerned, but rather an informed and conscious reliance. Participation is then increasingly becoming an indicator of perceived quality as far as parents are concerned; this is demonstrated *a contrario* by their complaints where participation issues are severely lacking (like in Cosenza, Italy).

It is true that childcare structures may well offer an excellent service, both from the structural and from the pedagogical point of view, even if they are closed to the outside. Though, the existence of some occasion to "participate" gives the parents more chances to enter the structure and have a look at the state of the premises (as far as the structural level is concerned), and allows them, at the same time, to establish a link between life within the service and life within the family. This is a fundamental element to include the pedagogical experience into a more comprehensive framework, taking into account the child's universe as a whole (as far as the pedagogic level is concerned).

Though, none of the involved actors (parents, educators, and administrators) aim at a participation of parents in the definition either of the contents of childcare or of its yearly planning as well as its weekly or daily organisation. Parents themselves are aware of not having the necessary competencies and that anyway that is not their role (an idea decidedly shared by the professionals of childcare and the administrators). As a matter of fact, in a society characterised by increasing specialisation, the distinction of roles is something reassuring for

parents. This, as long as this age range (< 3 years) is more and more conceptualised as a separate age, not only with specific needs, but also with its own resources, which require particular professional abilities in order to be helped to develop.

*Information and transparency*

*Information of users is particularly relevant because nowadays access also depends a lot on the ability to get information on the services, to analyse it and to convince the people in charge of selection of the reality and seriousness of one's childcare needs. There is, in other words, also an element of human capital in the process of selection, which can make access patterns harder for some users.*

Pedagogical transparency and shared decision making are elements of social cohesion, as only the persons who are informed can raise their right to oppose themselves to decisions. And only if they have a place where their "no" is listened to can they feel integrated, even disregarding what the final decision is. An example of a sensible question is the issue of children's diet. It is true that in most cases users (parents in our case) do not have the *exit power* (i.e. go to another structure if their requests are not satisfied; this could only be done in a situation of available places). Nonetheless, the fact of having at least a *voice power* makes parents feel involved, it increases trust and confidence towards the service and its management and staff, which are basic elements for participation and for social cohesion[25].

Being informed and participating in official debates, though is time-consuming, as are other kinds of participation. Time is in fact the crucial resource that is needed to participate and that often makes the difference (and sometimes discriminates) between those who have time to spend in participating and those who do not. This can also directly become a real question of access, when this is conditioned by the possibility to devote some time to the care structure that one wants to use.

*Parents' participation in associative services*

It seems that the diversification of providers and services is rather positive with respect to participation (Pestoff and Stranbrink, *infra*), as the services established and managed by Third Sector agencies are often (but not always, it's not automatic) more sensible towards spaces of participation and occasions of sociability. In particular, services for immigrants (as in Monza and Montreuil), low income households (as in Schaerbeek), atypical workers (as in Rennes) or deprived areas (British case), manage to create around the childcare service a network, maybe tiny, but still meaningful, in which resources are shared (i.e. through *Time Banks*), thus increasing the existing reciprocity relations, and strengthening the proximity networks that go beyond the family, nowadays rather rare.

Still, the same cannot be said *a priori* for any Third Sector actor working in the childcare field. For instance, those social co-operatives that merely manage public owned and ruled childcare services do not carry out a substantially different program from the point of view of participation as opposed to purely public managed services. Similarly, it seems not possible to draw a general rule on the attitude of private for profit services on participation issues. As for many other items concerning childcare provision, its content and its quality, there exists a rather wide range of private supply, from very good quality, to really bad.

[25] An illustrative case was given in the case of Northern Italy, where the crèche's parents' committee tried to change the municipal regulation, adding a few diseases to the list of infective illnesses (for which a special "quarantine" program is foreseen to protect the healthy children). This was not possible for administrative and legal reasons (it is the local health agency who has this competence), but the parents' representatives clearly expressed a feeling of satisfaction for having had the chance to make their voice (Mingione *et al*, 2003).

The case of *crèches parentales* in France and associative structures in Sweden and Germany is even more particular. Here parents intervene directly first in the establishment of their structures, then in the definition of the pedagogical programme and in the practical organisation and implementation of the activities[26]. Anyway, participation in this context is not only an exercise of active citizenship and a heritage of the new pedagogy of the 1970s. It is also an obligation, sometimes very burdensome. Only parents who can have a rather flexible use of their time, are able to devote a part of it to the association. This generally excludes lone parents and double earner households, thus having an impact on access issues[27]. To the time constraints, we have to add a wide power of the founder families to select the new applications. As a consequence, users are often socially homogeneous.

In this contradiction – *being obliged to participate* – lies the core of the possible tensions originated around the issue of participation, tensions between voluntarism and lack of alternatives. The same is true for the Bulgarian public services, where – as it has been seen – parents' economic, in-kind and time disposal participation is a real *condition sine qua non* for the survival of the services. This takes us once again back to the unfair allocation of public resources as far as in-kind services, and childcare services in particular are concerned, as well as to the retrenchment of public transfers from central to local governments, which generally support the bulk of these expenditures.

*Participation in the individual care*

Is it possible to talk about participation also concerning the individual care? It is necessary to make a distinction between informal or black-market childminders (and countries where these are predominant like Italy and Spain), who generally look after one child at the time, and formally regulated childminders (and countries where these are predominant such as France and Belgium), who usually look after a small group of children, thus almost reproducing a micro-crèche environment[28]. Both formal and informal childminders are generally more available for informal exchanges with parents on the daily experiences ("has the child eaten and slept?"). This kind of exchange can be a little limited in collective care structures because of the higher number of children and of the presence of shifts among educators, who on the contrary are generally more prepared than childminders to give pedagogical advice ("how to behave about the napkin, the feed, the pacifier…?").

Though, *real* participation occasions are difficult to realise for a childminder, who usually works in a rather isolated way. Things can be a bit different for those childminders who are organised in networks (Montreuil, Rennes), who sometimes have common moments and spaces, where their children meet in larger groups (what is called "the *coté crèche* of the *relais d'assistantes maternelles"*). Still, from our case studies, we do not have evidence of childminders' networks organising social events that also involve the families.

### *4.2. Participation of childcare workers*

It should not be forgotten that parents' participation requires more work for educators and co-ordinators of childcare services: organising meetings and parties, being available for extra-talks with parents, etc. are all highly time-consuming activities, which are to be added to the normal classroom, co-ordination and upgrading hours. In this sense the parenthood support is an element of quality of the services, but also something that puts under pressure the functioning of

[26] Even if they hire professional educators, the *crèches parentales* are based on the voluntary work of parents, who must generally be present in the structure one or half a day per week (the so-called *permanences*).

[27] The same is true for the associative *haltes garderies*.

[28] These experiences begin to be tested in Southern European countries as well, but they are still marginal.

traditional services and calls for changes, possibly originating tensions. That's why the staff considers such an effort as a feature of service quality, also itself.

Moreover these social activities may well also be gratifying for the educators, as they can see their role, competencies and experience recognised by the general interest and the specific requests of parents, which imply a certain degree of trust in them.

As far as the participation of childcare workers to the organisation of the service is concerned, we do not have many elements in the case-study reports to allow us a real comparison. Anyway, we can say in a general way that shared management and joint decision-making about the pedagogical orientation and the yearly, weekly and daily organisation of the activities is to be found more often in the public and associative structures. In for-profit services workers' participation is generally less pronounced and formalised, and more dependent on single entrepreneurs' sensibility. However, as collective childcare is largely a work in teams, a strictly hierarchical organisation is hard to imagine.

### *4.3. Participation of childcare services to the neighbourhood life*

In almost all countries included in our study it is possible to observe a recently growing attention about the possibility to open up childcare services to the territory they belong to, that is to say their neighbourhood. This goes parallel with the trend towards the provision of a less "looking after" and more pre-educational service, as well as the opening to a wider participation of the parents. This opening towards the neighbourhood generally passes through special events such as summer parties, or *parenthood support* initiatives[29], which often involve the *crèche* garden. The latter carries out a function of physical bridge between the structure, generally closed to strangers because of safety reasons, and the surroundings (Wenger, 1998). These initiatives are carried out with great prudence, because the fragility of young children dissuades from indiscriminate opening without a specific project and *ad hoc* organised activities and adequate security. However, there is increasing interest on the potentiality of these experiences to promote social cohesion at the very local level.

*Is there more social cohesion where there is more participation?*

The fostering to some degree of free, voluntary participation (not necessarily the same kind and at the same level in different contexts) can help to enhance social cohesion. Particularly useful in this sense can be leisure activities, such as parties, playtime occasions, recites showing some of the competencies attained by children[30], but also the informative meetings. These allow parents to see sections of everyday crèche life, which answers to their need of being informed, without demanding too much time (generally a very scant resource for working parents). At the same time, these occasions permit parents to get to know each other, and eventually find out that they live nearby and that they could further share time and/or everyday duties, as they have children of the same age, thus with similar needs[31]. Therefore the sociability increases thanks to these initiatives.

To conclude, we can say that the promotion (not the obligation) of participation can improve social cohesion at local level, through the improvement of relations among citizens and helping

---

[29] This broad term encompasses all those activities aiming at supporting families in their parental responsibilities and include organised spaces where adults and children can spend time with educators; meetings with experts; extended face-to-face meetings parents-crèche staff; occasions to help young families socialise, such as crèche parties, etc. The aim is to prevent the development of family and social problems in a society where horizontal ties are increasingly narrowing (Mingione *et al*, 2003).

[30] *"It's incredible how many things young children can do: sing, play, disguise themselves, create things, paint…"* [for profit crèche manager]. *"In the crèche there happen wonderful things"* [public crèche manager].

[31] For instance accompanying alternatively children to or from the service, in case of emergencies.

to strengthen proximity networks, thus contributing to prevent the development of social problems. Such a preventive function is possible through the primary function of support to conciliation of professional and family life, which often entails a high level of stress and tiredness, and through initiatives of parenthood support. All this can make the childcare services a strategic point – most of all if in network with the other local social services and the other degrees of schooling – in order to improve the quality of life, through an early diagnostic of emerging social problems and specific integrated intervention and – more in general – the favouring of more cohesive proximity relations. This is possible thanks to the withdrawal of the "looking after" service rationale, which foresaw a more definite separation between service structure and the surroundings (for reasons of hygiene and safety, but also due to the lack of political basis for the creation of such bridges), as well as between the time spent in the structure and the time spent with the family. It is this movement towards valorising the socialising function – in a broad sense, involving children, families and the neighbourhood community – of childcare services that opens up the way to and is at the same time reciprocally reinforced by participation spaces.

## CONCLUSION : WHAT IS THE RELATION BETWEEN WELFARE MIX AND SOCIAL COHESION?

As we have seen (1st part) diversification of services and providers in childcare is an observable trend which originates from the fact that families' care needs are more and more important and increasingly differentiated. In concluding this report we would like to come back to the main question of the research project: *does the diversification of childcare providers increase social cohesion?* Stemming from the empirical evidence of our case studies, we believe that such a relation is not automatic, but that it depends on the local context. In other words, diversification is not *necessarily* good for social cohesion. To illustrate this, it will be useful to go back to the three indicators we identified to analyse the concept of social cohesion (3.2.4).

- Concerning *access*, as we have seen diversification of services and even more of providers *can* end up in a *segmentation* of the demand into separated households' groups, following different access paths predetermined by services' access criteria. Segmentation of access may then mean inner homogeneity of children (households) attending the same service and thus separation of children (households) coming from different social backgrounds. Such an output would be clearly questionable for social cohesion as we have defined it, and in particular against *equal* opportunities for children *disregarding* their social origins to access high quality childcare.
- Concerning *quality,* the level supplied by the different childcare providers can vary according to the strictness of local controls and to the average quality level of childcare services in the local context, in particular of the public services which sign the line almost everywhere (imitation effect). So, in absence of careful regulation in the two senses (official controls and high quality standards), and especially in a context of lack of places (thus in absence of competition), a diversified system could also end up in low quality service level.
- Concerning *participation*, in general there are more occasions to participate in more diversified contexts. Historically it's been the Third Sector agencies who have most drawn attention on participation issues. Therefore, contexts where stakeholders are more numerous and diverse should in theory favour wider participation patterns.

Diversification can be important, but not essential for the development of social cohesion. An example of this is given by the case of Pesaro in the centre of Italy, where the providers' diversification is rather low. Here for profit providers are totally absent, while third sector agencies are rather active, but in a context which is widely determined by the local government.

Childcare supply is totally public, through either only publicly financed or also publicly managed services. Though, despite the very low degree of provider's (not services') diversity, social cohesion in the local context is high, the incidence of social diseases is rather limited, a good balance is observed between welfare needs and available answers. This situation is the result of a very particular socio-economic and political local context, with its owns characteristics and historical development (a case of the so-called "Third Italy"). As the studies on local welfare systems have showed, it is not possible to export patterns from one context to the other. Every context develops its own answers, and of course, the more the demand is articulated (according for instance to the features of local labour market), the more the diversification of the supply may be positive.

*Freedom of choice and social cohesion, an ambiguous relation*

We have seen that there is not one single and simple answer to preserve and promote social cohesion in a context of changing and multiplying social needs and of narrowing monetary resources. What makes the difference, then? Is it possible to identify some factors that influence in a positive way the link between diversification and social cohesion?

Apparently, in a context of changing – and most of all diversifying – needs, which challenge the existing welfare structures, a type of diversification that increased the freedom of choice of families could have a positive effect on social cohesion. Let's go back once again to our indicators in order to see how.

- concerning *access*, if freedom of choice was wider, paths would potentially be less predetermined by households' situation (working condition, income level, etc.);
- *quality* should improve; in fact, in presence of fewer constraints limiting access, households should in principle choose structures with the highest quality level. This should create competition among providers and thus push upwards quality standards;
- concerning *participation***,** similarly families should potentially privilege those services supplying the participation pattern more suitable to their preference and approach.

Nevertheless, favouring freedom of choice is not necessarily favourable to social cohesion, especially if it meant following at an advanced degree the ongoing process of individualisation of way of living and consequently of social and care needs. In fact, if each household could choose "only" on the basis of its own needs and preferences, households would less and less be brought to meet and come to a mediation among their different interests, in order to find an agreement with the others. This could end up in another type of segmentation, not *pre-determined* on the basis of the households' conditions, but still anyway *determined* on the basis of their preferences which might well reflect their socio-economic conditions. In other words, the fact of being obliged by the existing supply, to confront with the available services, even if they do not perfectly correspond the preferences each one has in principle, could have a positive impact on local social cohesion.

An example of this was given by the multi-ethnic childcare service in Monza. The Italian families did not choose it because of a specific socio-political point of view (i.e. the desire to be part of a solidarity network and to expose young children to ethnic and social diversity) but simply because they could not access the municipal *crèches* and they needed an affordable service. Still, an important solidarity network was born among the families attending the service, which was positive for the development of local social cohesion (equal opportunities for Italians and foreigners, good quality, participation, integration).

*A governance of diversity and of diversification*

Then, social cohesion stems from a good *balance between the individualization of needs (and welfare answers) and the standardization as mediation of differences.* Of course this balance is

not easy to find and has different concrete configurations according to the local context. It is because of the gaps between social needs and welfare answers that stress and dissatisfaction emerge at personal, family and local level.

The answer is then to be searched in a governance of diversification, capable of adapting to the different contexts, with their different needs and resources (Evers and Riedel, infra). In this sense, as Laurent Fraisse suggests, the discourse on social cohesion related to childcare could originate from a lack of governance of the complexity and diversity of childcare local systems, and from the consequent difficulties in managing the emerging tensions (see 1st part). At the same time and parallel, it is exactly the lack of governance which does not permit that diversification has a positive impact on social cohesion, as it is necessary to govern diversity in order to contain and prevent social inequalities and segmentation.

Hence, diversification does not automatically increase the parents' choice and social cohesion. Under which conditions does a policy of diversification of supply improve social cohesion? We could say that social cohesion has a positive impact if:

- it does not lead to stagnation but to an increase of public investment in childcare;
- it integrates the governance mechanisms in terms of access, quality and participation;
- it reinforces the legitimacy of national and local childcare policies;
- it reinforces the transversability of public policies concerning childcare: employment policies, policies of equal opportunities for men and women, of fight against exclusion.

In concluding, then, we recommend that European countries invest more in *conscious projects to develop good quality childcare*, not only in collective services, but also in professionalism of individual care, and in intermediate solutions such as the *crèches familiales* and the *tempo famiglie*. Of course, de-familisation[32] processes cannot be manipulated through policies, but it is rightful and advisable to develop projects in order to answer to the existing unsatisfied demand of good quality childcare, and at the same time govern diversification, in order to increase social cohesion in European societies.

[32] Externalisation of care tasks out of the family, facilitating women's paid work (Esping-Andersen, 1999).

## Bibliographical References


Andersson, B. (1992) *Effects of public day care: a longitudinal study*, in "Child Development", 60.

Andreotti, A. and Benassi, D. (to be published) *L'ambiente di vita e le situazioni di disagio sociale (povertà, ineguaglianza, discriminazione)*, in Grassi, R. (a cura di), "La condizione dell'infanzia e dell'adolescenza nella società italiana", Istituto Iard Franco Brambilla, Quaderni del Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, Roma, Le Monnier.

Balbo, L. (1978) "La doppia presenza", in *Inchiesta*, 32, pp. 3-6, Dedalo, Bari.

Bernard, P. (1999) *La cohésion sociale : critique dialectique d'un quasi-concept*, revue *Lien social et Politiques – RIAC*, n°41, Montréal.

Bloch, F. et Buisson, M. (1998) *La garde des enfants une histoire de femmes. Entre don, équité et rémunération*, L'Harmattan, Paris.

Broberg *et. al.* (1989) *Effects of day care on the development of cognitive abilities in eight years old: a longitudinal study*, in "Devlopment Psychology", 33, pp. 62-69.

Burnay, N. (2004) *Chomage et transmissions générationnelles*, contribution au colloque CERC "L'avenir des enfants des familles defavourisées en France", Paris, 1 April 2004.

Coleman, J. (1988), *Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital* in "American Journal of Sociology" 94, pp. 95-120.

Dandolova *et al.* (2003) *Bulgarian TSFEPS case studies report*, www.emes.net

Duée, M. (2004) *L'impact du chomage des parents sur le devenir scolaire des enfants*, contrib. au colloque CERC "L'avenir des enfants des familles defavorisées en France", Paris, 1 April.

Durkheim, E. (1893) *De la division du travail social*, rééd. (1991) Paris, P.U.F.

*Duru-Bellat, M. (2002)* Les inégalités sociales à l'école. Genèse et mythes*, Paris, PUF.*

*Esping-Andersen (1999)* Social foundations of postindustrial economies*, Oxford University Press.*

*Esping-Andersen, G. and Mestrers, J (2003)* Ineguaglianza delle opportunità ed eredità sociale*, in "Stato e mercato" n. 67, 4/2003, Il Mulino, Bologna, pp. 123-151.*

Esping-Andersen, G. (1999) *Les trois mondes de l'Etat-providence*, Paris, P.U.F.

Eurostat (2001) *Social trends and social policies*, p. 13.

Granovetter, M. (1985), *Economic Action And Social Structure: The Problem Of Embeddedness*, in "American Journal of Sociology", n. 91, pp. 481-510.

Gunnarsson, *et. al.* (1999) *Early childhood education and care policy in Sweden*, Background report, Oecd Thematic review, Ministry of Education and Science.

Jeantheau, J.P. and Murat, F. (1998) *Observation à l'entrée au CP des élèves du panel 1997*, in "Note d'information", Ministère de l'Education Nationale, Paris.

Jenson, J., *Les contours de la cohésion sociale : l'état de la recherche au Canada*, Ottawa, Réseaux canadiens de recherche en politiques publiques.

Kherroubi, M. (2004) *Que sait-on de l'impact des situations défavorisées sur la trajectoire scolaire des enfants?* contribution au colloque CERC "L'avenir des enfants des familles defavorisées".

Kymlicka W (1990) *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction*, Oxford University Press.

Lewis (1993) (ed.) *Women and social policies in Europe. Work, family and the State*, Edward Elgar Pub, London.

Marx, K. (1867) *Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*

Mingione *et al* (2003) *TSFEPS Italian national report*, www.emes.net

Mingione *et al* (2003) *TSFEPS Italian case studies report*, www.emes.net

Oecd (2001) *Starting strong: early childhood education and care. Petite enfance, grands défis, éducation et structures d'accueil*, Paris.

Oecd (2002a) *Education at glance: Oecd indicators*, Paris.

Oecd (2002b) *The Oecd Programme for international student assessment*, Paris.

Parsons, T. (1951) *The Social System*.

Pateman, C. (1989) *The sexual contract*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

Putnam, R. (1993) *Making democracy work: civic traditions in modern Italy*, University Press, Princeton

Smith, A. (1776) *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations*.

Tönnies (1887) *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*.

*Traité de l'Union Européenne, version consolidée*, Journal officiel des Communautés européennes, C 325/01, 24.12.2002.

Wenger (1998) *Communities of practice, learning, meaning and identity*, Cambridge University Press, New York, quoted in Bifulco, L. (ed) *Il genius loci del welfare. Strutture e processi della qualità sociale*, (2003) Edizioni Officina, Roma.

Zaouche-Gauchon, C. *et al.* (2004) *conditions de vie defavorisées et développement du jeune enfant*, contrib. au colloque CERC "L'avenir des enfants des familles defavorisées en France", Paris.

TSFEPS References (available on www.emes.net)

*National reports*

Dandolova *et al.* (2002) *Rapport national bulgare*;

Evers, A, Riedel, B. (2002) *German TSFEPS nationalreport*;

Eme, B. ; Fraisse, L, (2002) *Rapport français d'études de cas TSFEPS* ;

Lewis *et al.* (2002) *TSFEPS British national report;*

Lhuiller *et al.* (2002), *Rapport national belge TSFEPS ;*

Mingione *et al.* (2002) *TSFEPS Italian National Report*;

Pestoff, V, Strandbrinck, P. (2002) *TSFEPS Swedish national report;*

Vidal, I, Claver, N. (2002) *Spanish TSFEPS national report*.

*Case-studies reports*

Dandolova, I. *et al.* (2003) *Transformations des familles et modes d'accueil à la petite enfance : politiques, services et cohésion sociale* ;

Evers, A., Riedel, B., (2003) *TSFEPS Governance and Social Cohesion in Childcare. The Example of Frankfurt and München. German Case Study Report ;*

Fraisse, L. Bucolo, E. Eme, B. (2003), *Rapports d'études de cas français Rennes et Montreuil* ;

Lewis, J., Welsh E., Tanner, E. (2003), *TSFEPS. UK Case Study Report ;*

Lhuillier, V. (2003), *Les services d'accueil aux jeunes enfants (0-6 ans) Etudes de cas* ;

Mingione, E., *et al.* (2003) *TSFEPS WP4. Italian case studies report* ;

Pestoff, V., Strandbrink, P., Anderson, J., Seger, N., (2004), *Small children in a big system. A case study of childcare in Stockholm and Östersund* ;

Vidal, I., Claver, N. (2003) *Changing Family Structure and Social Policy. Childcare Services in Europe and Social Cohesion. Spain: Case Study*.

**Cross-country reports**

Eme, B., Fraisse, L., (2002), *TSFEPS WP3, Synthèse des études de cas nationaux* ;

Evers A., Riedel, B., (2003b), *Governing diversity ;*

Fraisse, L., Eme, B., (2003), *La gouvernance locale de la petite enfance – Lecture transversale ;*

Lewis, J., Nowakowska, N., (2003b) *Transversal analysis : quality of childcare ;*

Lhuiller, V. (2003b) *Accès et équité dans les milieux d'accueil de jeunes enfants*;

Mingione, Andreotti, Sabatinelli (2003), *TSFEPS methodology and local socio-economic contexts* ;

Pestoff, V, Strandbrink, P. (2003), *Participation and democracy in childcare services in eight European countries;*

Vidal, I, Claver, N. (2003b) *Financing childcare services in Europe.*