

“FAMILY CENTERS FOR CHILDREN”

This document is part of a larger collection of examples of current policies for young people in Europe. The collection is an outcome of a European research project called “UP2YOUTH – Youth: actor of social change?”

The basic idea of the “current practice” collection is to see how current practices and policies relate to young people as active agents in shaping their lives. Therefore, our intention is not a collection of “good” or “best” practices. Rather, it includes also practices, which are interesting because of their relation to young people’s agency but which involve problematic aspects, such as restricted financial resources, a very thin spread, or no clear evaluation criteria. We have applied a searching pattern which asked for “strengths” and “weaknesses”. This explicitly opens space for your own evaluation, because also policies are included, which definitely do have weaknesses, but are highly interesting for specific reasons. Therefore we have to stress that the researchers did not evaluate these practices themselves.

The whole collection can be found at <http://www.up2youth.org/content/view/192/60/>

Section	Indications of contents
Title of programme/ practice	FAMILY CENTERS FOR CHILDREN
Location	Bulgaria, several municipalities in Bulgaria planning to become nation-wide. Cities - Varna, Vidin, Vratza, Gabrovo, Dobritch, Kurdjaly, Pazardjik, Pleven, Russe, Sliven, Sofia, Shummen and Iambol.
Main theme	Young parenthood
Practice/Programme-related keywords	Reconciliation of paid work and family responsibilities, career development of parents of young children
Summary of programme/ practice	The programme addresses the problems in the reconciliation of paid work and family responsibilities and its main goal is to create conditions for encouraging the involvement in paid work and career development of parents with young children. It includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - creating conditions for a successful employment and career for parents of young children, - job offers for unemployed women in childcare, - providing quality services in family environment for children of working parents, - creating and testing of the model of family centers for care of small children.

Target	<p>Target groups/issues/problems addressed:</p> <p>The main target groups are two:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - women caring for young children at home and wishing to return to paid work, and - women registered as unemployed in the Labour Offices in the chosen municipalities. In particular, the project tried to involve unemployed nurses, teachers, social workers and parents with children aged 1-5 years.
Objectives of programme/ practice	<p>The objective is to create conditions for encouraging the involvement in paid work and professional development of parents with children. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - creating conditions for a successful employment and career for parents of young children, - job offers for unemployed women in childcare, - providing quality services in family environment for children of working parents, - creating and testing of the model of family centers for care of small children.
Content of programme/ practice	<p>The project includes the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information campaign - Identification of the target groups - Motivating of unemployed women for active job search - Forming of implementation teams - Recruiting of participants - Training of unemployed women to apply the standards for the required services to small children in a family environment. - Financial support to the employers - Opening of new centres - Control and monitoring.
Time scale	<p>The project runs from 2005 till 2009.</p>

<p>Programme/ practice design</p>	<p>1) Development of programme/practice: The project “Family centers for children” is still in its pilot phase. It was initiated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.</p> <p>2) Decision-making actors and process: The Ministry and local municipalities</p> <p>3) Management and leadership of programme: The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy</p> <p>4) Implementation: Institutions implementing the project are</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy 2. The National Labour Agency 3. Regional Labour Offices 4. Local Labour Offices 5. Agencies for Social Assistance 6. Employment Commissions (social partners in the municipalities) 7. Private employers, including NGOs. <p>5) Legal framework: The basic principles of the project are: conformity with the law; EU principles of equality between men and women on the labour market and equal opportunities for work, care and developing a person’s career in terms of a balance between family and professional life; and non-admission of any kind of discrimination – on ethnic, age, religious, political, or other grounds.</p>
<p>Resources involved</p>	<p>The funding for the project comes from the state budget in accordance with the Law for Encouraging of Employment and the National Action Plan.</p> <p>The policy context for this programme is shaped by the understanding of two main barriers: the fact that women’s access to the labour market and career development is hampered by their taking the greater part of</p>

	<p>policy aiming to raise the activity rate of the population. The strategy is to create a policy approach toward employment based on the life course. In Bulgarian conditions this means to offer alternative forms of childcare in addition to the traditional set of childcare facilities.</p>
Evaluation	<p>1) Evaluation process: Not yet, but it was prolonged by the Ministry. Initially it had to finish in 2008.</p>
	<p>2) Results/ impact of programme: In our view the programme has a very thin spread – it provided employment to 28 persons. The reports of the ministry do not give explanation whether this is due to the limited funding or the target groups are not interested. The funding for the first three years (2006-2008) was 90454 BGN.</p>
	<p>3) Difficulties encountered: See above</p>
	<p>4) Assessment of programme/ action/ practice in terms of sustainability: The programme was prolonged by the Ministry with one year and after that it will be evaluated and decided how to proceed.</p>
Lessons to be drawn from programme or practice implemented	<p>This project was pointed at as a good practice to us by experts from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy as a programme meeting young parents' needs for childcare in a more flexible way. The published results from the project show that it has a very thin spread. For its first three years 28 people have been involved in various forms of training and 20 have been employed at a salary of 220 BGN (about 115 Euro per month) which was slightly higher than the minimum salary for the country. Currently 14 centres are functioning as a result of the project and 4 new are envisioned till its end in 2009.</p>
Contact information	No information
Other doc related to the programme/ practice	<p>http://www.mlsp.government.bg www.az.government.bg www.asp.government.bg</p>