



Annex: Inputs of EU national social partners on childcare

In July 2007, ETUC, BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME and CEEP sent a letter to the European Commission stating that, in response to the second stage consultation on reconciliation of professional, private and family life, EU social partners had decided to set up a joint working group to carry out an evaluation process of all elements of their framework agreement on Parental Leave (which formed the basis of Directive 96/34/EC).

European social partners intend to use this opportunity to evaluate parental leave arrangements in connection with other arrangements supporting parents and work life balance, such as flexible work arrangements and childcare, as well as other forms of leave, to assess if joint actions need to be taken, and at what level.

As a consequence, they drew up a questionnaire covering the area of conciliation of work life and private life which was sent, in December 2007, to the affiliated member organisations of BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP, ETUC as well as to the Liaison Committee CEC and EUROCADRES.

With specific regard to the issues of childcare national members were asked to tackle the following questions:

- Do you consider the situation in your country with regard to the availability, affordability and accessibility of childcare facilities satisfactory?
- What role do you see for the social partners in relation to other actors (public authorities) to improve the situation with regard to childcare facilities?

In total, 36 replies were collected, from 24 EU countries plus Norway and Iceland. The majority of these contributions are of a joint nature, while some others express solely the views of trade unions or employers' organisations.

The original contributions are listed below. For more information please contact:

<u>BUSINESSEUROPE</u>	<u>ETUC</u>
Maxime Cerutti m.cerutti@businessseurope.eu Tel: +32 2 237 6537	Sinead Tiernan stiernan@etuc.org Tel: +32 2 224 0595

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Austria

JOINT CONTRIBUTION

Sources of information:

- Trade unions: ÖGB (Austrian Trade Union Federation), member of ETUC
- Employers: IV (Federation of Austrian Industry), member of BUSINESSEUROPE; WKÖ (Austrian Federal Economic Chamber), member of UEAPME; VÖWG (Verband der Öffentlichen Wirtschaft und Gemeinwirtschaft Österreichs), member of CEEP

The increase in child care facilities by 5.000 places every year is a first step in the right direction. But there are still thousands of child care facilities missing. The affordability could be improved: Child care facilities belong to the competence of the 9 Länder, therefore the situation regarding affordability differs considerably.

Another concern of the social partners is the contribution of employers to a better reconciliation of working and family life. Allowances in kind are in general taxable benefits. Only company kindergardens are free of income and social security tax. Benefits for external child care facilities or child care vouchers are again taxable. An equal treatment of those optional benefits would be useful for employers as well as for employees. By adaptations in national legislation benefits of employers for external child care facilities could be exempted from income and social security tax.

The Austrian way of social partnership in all questions concerning labour policy is very efficient and effective. In the field of child care the co-operation between public authorities and social partners could be improved.

Belgium

JOINT CONTRIBUTION

Sources of information:

- Trade unions: FGTB-ABVV (General Federation of Labour in Belgium), ACV-CSC (Confederation of Christian Trade Unions) and CGSLB (General Central of Liberal Trade Unions of Belgium), members of ETUC
- Employers: FEB (Federation of Belgian enterprises), member of BUSINESSEUROPE

Vu la différence de situation et d'investissement en matière de structures d'accueil entre les communautés, un descriptif de ce problème suit.

Communauté française

Des problèmes de pénuries de structures d'accueil et de places d'accueil existent en communauté française de Belgique tant pour les enfants de 0 à 3 ans (accueil de la petite enfance) que pour les enfants en âge scolaire (garde avant et après l'école, les mercredis après-midi et durant les congés scolaires).

Etant donné qu'il incombe encore souvent aux femmes d'assumer la responsabilité de l'organisation de la garde de leurs enfants, elles sont directement concernées par ce problème. Les femmes connaissent le parcours de la combattante tant pour trouver une solution pour l'accueil des 0-3 ans que pour l'accueil des 3-12 ans en dehors des périodes scolaires.

Concernant le coût, plusieurs systèmes se côtoient : le système des milieux d'accueil, agréés et subventionnés qui pratiquent des tarifs en fonction des revenus et le système des milieux d'accueil privés agréés qui pratiquent des tarifs libres.

Vu le dispositif insuffisant au niveau subventionné les familles sont dans l'obligation de s'adresser au privé. Les conséquences sont importantes en terme de coût. Certains publics sont confrontés à des difficultés importantes. Les travailleuses précarisées qui ont déjà beaucoup de difficultés à trouver une place d'accueil ont d'autant plus de difficultés étant donné le coût des places disponibles.

Les demandeuses d'emploi sont dans une situation où elles ont peu de chance de trouver une place d'accueil pour leur enfant de moins de trois ans ce qui entrave lourdement leur recherche d'emploi ou leur participation à une formation professionnelle.

Du côté flamand

L'analyse de l'évolution démographique et sociologique en Flandre démontre 4 causes qui sont à la base d'une demande accrue, prévisible à court terme, de solutions d'accueil officielles.

1. L'INS note depuis 2002 un chiffre des naissances en légère augmentation de 2,5 %. Pour ces enfants et leurs parents, le souhait est de trouver dans les trois mois qui suivent la naissance, une place d'accueil. Il y a 5000 enfants de plus qui sont nés. Ceci crée une demande complémentaire de 2000 nouvelles places. On constate également une augmentation du vieillissement, ce qui entraîne une augmentation de la demande de soins.
2. La politique d'activation a pour effet que plus de demandeurs d'emploi sont en recherche de place d'accueil pour leurs enfants. Le refus de travail ou d'une formation lié au défaut de structures d'accueil n'est plus admis dans les faits.
3. Les gens restent plus longtemps actifs sur le marché du travail. Ce maintien en activité plus long fait que beaucoup de travailleurs de 50 ans et plus travaillent encore quand leurs petits enfants arrivent et que se posent des questions de garde de ceux-ci. Ils s'occupent aussi souvent de leurs (beaux-)parents. La SEE met le taux d'activité des travailleurs âgés de 55 à 64 ans à 50 % à l'échéance de 2010...
4. Les 50 – 60 ans témoignent d'une autre vision de la vie que leurs propres parents. Leur empressement à accueillir leurs petits enfants durant la semaine entière de travail est en diminution. Cette forme d'accueil informel va en diminuant.
5. On s'attend à une augmentation du nombre des familles monoparentales (pères seuls ou mères seules). Ils ont en cette qualité encore davantage de besoins en terme de flexibilité en leur faveur et de sécurité. Un accueil plus flexible est attendu de leur part. Il y a donc un besoin criant de places supplémentaires d'accueil reconnu par les autorités et subsidié.

Sur base des données en avril 2005, on prévoit à l'horizon de 2009, un manque de 6957 places d'accueil préscolaire. Les places déjà reconnues subviennent à peine aux besoins. L'accord de gouvernement au niveau de la Flandre entend réaliser les objectifs de Barcelone. L'année 2007 a vu l'offre formelle portée à un niveau qui dépasse le cap général des 33 % mais pas dans des villes telles Aalst, Antwerpen et Genk. Il convient de mettre en place en plan de croissance du nombre de places d'accueil de ce type sous peine d'être confronté à ce manque prévisible.

En ce qui concerne l'accueil extrascolaire aussi, il manque 6800 places qui doivent encore venir.

Les syndicats plaident pour un développement maximal de ces places via le secteur reconnu et subsidié. Ce choix est meilleur pour lutter contre la marchandisation du secteur de l'accueil de l'enfance. Il apporte la meilleure garantie de qualité, notamment par rapport aux missions du service public. Les syndicats sont convaincus qu'une politique sociale est mieux et plus vite menée si elle se déroule via la reconnaissance et la subsidiation de structures.

Avec le plan pour l'accueil flexible et occasion l'administration flamande a pu répondre à la demande des parents d'une plus grande offre diversifiée de structures.

Les syndicats pensent que le gouvernement flamand doit poursuivre ses efforts allant dans le sens d'une meilleure diversification continue en étant attentif à la préservation du caractère spécifique de ces mesures.

Autres attentes :

- Un statut plein et entier pour les travailleurs du secteur (souvent des femmes).
- Un secteur véritablement professionnalisé avec des possibilités d'accès progressives et facilitées pour les personnes à faible qualification. Les personnes à faible qualification doivent via une politique solide de développement des compétences accéder aux métiers de l'accueil de l'enfance et dans le secteur des soins.
- Les familles les plus faibles en terme d'égalité des chances doivent recevoir des incitants en terme d'accessibilité à des structures d'accueil payables.
- Collaboration accrue entre état fédéral et entités fédérées.

Bulgaria

EMPLOYERS' CONTRIBUTION

Source of information:

- BIA (Bulgarian Industrial Association), member of BUSINESSEUROPE

Childcare facilities in the big cities are extremely insufficient. The situation in the other care facilities care for parentless dependents and old people is absolutely unsatisfactory. The bigger enterprises support these care facilities within their corporate social responsibility policy.

TRADE UNIONS' CONTRIBUTION

Source of information:

- PODKREPA (Confederation of Labour), member of ETUC

In Bulgaria existed relatively well functioning system of childcare - by day nursery and childgarden. It is up to parents to decide whether the child has to go to the childgarden or not.

In trade union organisations as the other social partners are involved at national, regional and sectoral level to work with the governmental institutions to expand the public support on equal opportunities programs and actions, to improve the efficiency of employment and training measures.

Cyprus

TRADE UNIONS' CONTRIBUTION

Source of information:

- DEOK (Democratic Labour Federation), member of ETUC

When it comes to preschool ages, the facilities are satisfactory. But when it comes to infantile ages the facilities are not satisfactory, since as it seems the state could not achieve the goal of Lisbon regarding the children of this age.

Moreover, when it comes to the function of all-day schools in order workers to be facilitated, some important steps have been made, but further effort is required.

The propulsion of the request for the creation of a pay desk for this aim with a contribution of the social partners will help to solve the problem, since the resource of this pay desk will be used in order to cover the expenses of working parents in order to take care of their children.

Also the creation of such structures in industrial areas and in every area, it will help the solution of this problem.

Czech Republic

EMPLOYERS' CONTRIBUTION

Source of information:

- SPCR (Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic), member of BUSINESSEUROPE

It is very paradox situation in the Czech Republic. After the velvet revolution/1989/ and all these economic and social changes it was a great campaign in the CZ according the western model to prefer stay home and carry out for a family. A very good and qualitative network of the child care facilities was completely destroyed and just now CZ is under the strong critic of EC in many its reports, that the child care facilities are not sufficient. It is true, particularly in the small cities and regions, where municipalities have no many to create or sustain these facilities. But the situation under the demographic pressure, will be better.

Role of the social partners:

- ✓ To make influence on decision-makers
- ✓ To influence the legislative process
- ✓ To encourage employers/companies to established their own childcare facilities. According some surveys they already do it or are going to do it.

TRADE UNIONS' CONTRIBUTION

Source of information:

- CMKOS (Czech Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions), member of ETUC

During the period of roughly 10 recent years the number of pre-school facilities has significantly dropped in the context of a general decrease of the birth rate. Within the last 2-3 years more children started to be born and, as a consequence, the capacity of crèches and kindergartens is highly insufficient.

Private kindergartens are in existence but these are not affordable for average families and tend to serve only the needs of the rich. Facilities operated by foreign institutions belong to the same category. They mostly also provide teaching of foreign languages and charge high fees. These types of facilities are affordable only for members of a very narrow social class.

During the discussion concerning the public finance reform ČMKOS launched a campaign advocating the preservation of the State's responsibility for the provision of childcare. Similarly, during the present preparations of the public health reform, ČMKOS strives for preserving the public character of health services and social services in general.

Denmark

JOINT CONTRIBUTION

Sources of information:

- Trade unions: LO (Danish Confederation of Trade Unions), FTF (Salaried Employees and Civil Servants' Confederation), members of ETUC
- Employers: DA (Confederation of Danish Employers), member of BUSINESSEUROPE

If you compare Denmark with the rest of Europe, it probably has some of the best public childcare facilities. Danish parents are thus offered a so-called childcare guarantee which is to ensure that everyone has access to childcare facilities as soon as their child is six months old. In a few major Danish cities, such as Copenhagen, however the childcare guarantee is not always fully effective. DA, LO and FTF agree that the childcare guarantee should always be observed.

In addition to this, LO, FTF and the affiliated unions have a number of different requirements and wishes for generally increasing both the quality and the flexibility of the childcare offers (for instance by making childcare institutions free of charge, offering free meals in childcare institutions and extending opening hours in childcare institutions).

DA, The Confederation of Danish Employers, on its side, wants to abolish pre-scheduled closing days in childcare institutions due to the fact that they generally impede flexibility in the labour market. In addition to this, DA would welcome more flexible opening hours in the childcare institutions - within the existing economic framework.

The social partners are stakeholders that work to influence legislation on a continuous basis.

EMPLOYERS' CONTRIBUTION

Source of information:

- Employers: members of the Danish section of CEEP

The childcare facilities in Denmark are satisfactory. There exist a wide variety of childcare facilities, and these facilities are available to all.

Estonia

JOINT CONTRIBUTION

Sources of information:

- Trade unions: EAKL (Confederation of Estonian Trade Unions), member of ETUC
- Employers: ETTK, (Confederation of Estonian employers) member of BUSINESSEUROPE

We have pre-school childcare facilities (kindergarten, day nursery), offering both childcare and early education up to 6 years of age, established either by local government or as a private initiative or company.

Alternative childcare facilities are playgroups, playrooms, children centers, family centers, family daycare, certified childminders, individual baby sitters, nanny's, established either by local government or as a private initiative or company.

Once the total number of fully-paid days are used up and there is no place for the child in the pre-school childcare facilities (kindergarten, day nursery), local government pays childcare services reimbursement (for example in Tallinn city pays 1875 krooni (€ 120) per month per child. The parents must find a suitable licenced childminder or alternative licenced childcare service and the service has been used for three months. The reimbursement of childcare costs stops as soon as the child is registered in pre-school childcare facility or school.

The main problem for reconciling family and work life is not enough kindergarten place (for example. Even if you sign up your new born child for a kindergarten place, you will not be guaranteed a place by the time your child is 3 years old). Alternative childcare possibilities are too expensive and the labour market is too inflexible for working part time and earning enough to pay for the childcare services.

Even the Chancellor of Justice has pointed out the problem of lack of childcare facilities and services and stimulated discussion on how to improve the situation.

Temporarily companies have set up children's play rooms in the company premises, so parents can leave their children for a couple of hours. In the long run it is not a solution, that companies start up a secondary business – a kindergarten, which requires as much expertise and following of strict health and sanitary regulations.

Finland

JOINT CONTRIBUTION

Sources of information:

- Trade unions: SAK (Central organisation of Finnish trade unions), STTK (Confederation of Salaried Employees) and AKAVA (Confederation of Unions for Academic Professionals), members of ETUC
- Employers: EK (Confederation of Finnish Industries), member of BUSINESSEUROPE; VTML (Office for the Government as Employer, KT (The local authority employers), KIT (The Commission of Church Employers), members of CEEP

Yes. The Finnish society supports families with children in many ways. The provision of available, affordable and accessible childcare services for small children is probably the most important single factor which has made women's high employment rate and quality jobs possible.

The Children's Daycare Act entered into force in 1973. Under this act, the local authorities must provide daycare services for children under school age, either at daycare centres or in the form of supervised family daycare. The parents have had since 1990 a subjective right for daycare for children under the age of three. In 1996 this right was extended to all children under school age.

The families were granted in 1997 an option to private care allowance for arranging private daycare for their children.

The municipalities are also responsible for organising morning and afternoon care outside school hours for school children in the first two grades. The parents pay a nominal fee for these care facilities.

In recent years there has been a possibility to make a tax deduction on household services, eg. child-minding and domestic services. The coverage of this deduction has been extended in a couple of years ago.

As the care functions have been organised and financed mainly by the state, there has been no need for the social partners to play a role in this. However, the social partners at national, sectoral and workplace level have been active in finding new tools for reconciling work and family life, eg. in the field of creating various forms of flexible work arrangements.

France

TRADE UNIONS' CONTRIBUTION

Source of information:

- CGT (Confédération Générale du Travail) member of ETUC

Dès le milieu des années 70, les politiques publiques françaises en matière d'équipements pour la petite enfance ont cherché à accompagner l'arrivée massive des femmes sur le marché du travail. A travers un effort important d'équipements, les capacités d'accueil dans les crèches collectives ont été démultipliées. Mais à partir des années 80, face à la crise de l'emploi qui ne cesse de grandir, l'offre d'accueil tend à être diversifiée et les modes de garde individuels sont encouragés par des prestations sociales et des dispositions fiscales favorables aux emplois familiaux.

A bien des égards, cette politique a en effet soutenu l'emploi des femmes, en offrant des prestations familiales conséquentes, des modes d'accueil des enfants importants, notamment :

- 45% des enfants de 0 à 3 ans pris en charge.
 - crèches 11%
 - Assistantes maternelles : 20%
 - Ecoles maternelles : 29%
- Près de 100% des enfants de 3 à 6 ans grâce à la maternelle
- Une amplitude d'ouverture sur la journée assez importantes : 8h-8h30 à 16h30, possibilité de gardes périscolaires (7h - 8h30 et 16h30-18h) ; cantines....
- Développement de crèches à horaires atypiques (pas forcément 24h/sur 24)
- Développement de modes d'accueil en relais (expérience Gepetto). Il s'agit d'expériences concernant les parents à horaires atypiques : un-e intervenant-e-qualifié-e vient au domicile de l'enfant et l'accompagne (ou va le chercher) dans sa structure d'accueil habituelle.
- Plus récemment, un nouveau thème semble engager les pouvoirs publics sur une réelle volonté d'articuler gestions des temps et égalité entre hommes et femmes, à travers les politiques des temps de la ville. Dans cette démarche, l'objectif est d'harmoniser les temps à l'échelle d'un territoire, à partir d'une concertation de tous les acteurs impliqués (élus, entreprises, usagers, salariés...) dans le cadre de "bureaux des temps" et d'offrir ainsi des services mieux adaptés aux besoins des usagers, singulièrement des familles, sans pour autant développer une flexibilité imposée aux salariés de ces services, en grande majorité des femmes (commerce, crèches, administrations, transports...). Différents rapports ont ainsi accompagné la mise en œuvre de cette démarche (Hervé, 2000, Bailly, 2001), désormais expérimentée sur plus d'une dizaine de sites en France (St Denis, Rennes, Poitiers...).

Source of information:

- CFTC (Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens) member of ETUC

Il y a aujourd'hui en France cinq millions de salariés qui ont un (ou plusieurs) enfant(s) de moins de six ans. La moitié d'entre eux ont un (ou plusieurs) enfant(s) en bas âge non scolarisé(s). 90 % des pères et 60 % des mères travaillent. De façon générale, 44 % des pères ayant un emploi et de jeunes enfants indiquent que c'est leur conjointe (qu'elle ait ou non un emploi) qui s'occupe principalement des enfants pendant leur temps de travail. Par conséquent, la question de la conciliation entre temps de travail et garde des enfants se pose donc de façon très différente pour les hommes et les femmes.

Ainsi, lorsque les femmes n'ont pas d'emploi, elles s'occupent souvent des enfants pendant le temps de travail de leur conjoint. Cette situation est accentuée par le manque de places d'accueil. Fin 2006, près de 10 000 établissements d'accueil collectif et services d'accueil familial offraient en France métropolitaine près de 328 000 places pour les enfants de moins de 6 ans, soit 9 000 places de plus qu'en 2005. Les établissements collectifs (crèches collectives, haltes-garderies, jardins d'enfants et établissements multi-accueil) accueillent 265 000 enfants et les crèches familiales offraient près de 63 000 places. Ces chiffres marquent une augmentation du nombre de places. Certes, mais lorsqu'on les met en rapport avec le nombre d'enfants de moins de 3 ans en 2006 (2 294 846) et/ou le nombre d'enfants de moins de 6 ans (4 612 720), on constate un fossé énorme, et on comprend mieux la situation à l'heure actuelle.

Pour l'ensemble de ces catégories, l'accueil est un problème majeur et la situation ne va pas en s'améliorant. Ainsi, 1 008 000 personnes bénéficiaient de l'allocation personnalisée d'autonomie (APA) au 31/12/2006, soit une augmentation de 1,9 % par rapport à septembre 2006 et de 6,3 % sur un an. Ces données illustrent l'ampleur que prend aujourd'hui le problème de la dépendance en France. C'est pourquoi l'accueil en établissement de soins et en maison de retraites doit être développé et encouragé par les pouvoirs publics. Il est essentiel de permettre à tout parent d'accéder à un service de qualité pour un moindre coût, l'offre répondant à la nécessité économique et sociale d'accueillir et/ou d'accompagner dignement les enfants et les personnes âgées dans la vie.

CEC CONTRIBUTION

Source of information:

- CFE-CGC (Confédération française de l'encadrement - Confédération générale des cadres) member of CEC

La France est en retard en matière d'accueil pour la petite enfance. Pas assez de crèches collectives municipales ou familiales. Les structures manquent partout tout autant dans les grandes villes qu'en milieu rural. Il y a un grand nombre de nourrices agréées (dans ce cas là, généralement le travail est accompli sérieusement), des contrôles sont effectués par la PMI (Protection Maternelle Infantile).. Mais parfois, par manque de structure, certaines personnes deviennent nourrices et cela pose problème. Quelques entreprises réservent des berceaux à l'année ou créent des crèches interentreprises mais elles sont rares.

Financièrement, il faudrait des aides plus importantes. Un exemple précis : la généralisation du CESU (Chèque Emploi Service Universel) qui est un chèque qui sert à payer un/une salarié (e) à domicile ou un crèche. Les comités d'entreprises donnent une participations sur ces chèques. Généralement il y a 30 % de remise sur le montant du chèque (un chèque acheté 10 € a une valeur de 13 €). Ces frais sont déductibles à hauteur de 50 % pour un montant précis (que je n'ai pas en tête).

La France est très en retard sur le sujet. Il y a vraiment beaucoup de choses à faire en la matière, à commencer d'une part par un congé spécifique et des infrastructures plus nombreuses et mieux adaptées.

Il faut que les organisations syndicales traitent ce dossier avec le gouvernement. Cela a été évoqué auprès de Monsieur Xavier Bertrand, ministre du Travail, lors de la conférence sur l'Égalité Professionnelle du 26 novembre 2007.

Germany

JOINT CONTRIBUTION

Sources of information:

- Trade unions: DGB (Confederation of German Trade Unions), member of ETUC
- Employers: BDA (Confederation of German Employers' Federation), member of BUSINESSEUROPE; ZDH (Central Federation of German Craft), member of UEAPME; Vka (Verband kommunaler Arbeitgeber), member of CEEP

The childcare situation in Germany, especially in the western part of Germany with regard to all-day care, is inadequate. At present the situation for children under the age of three is deficient. At the moment in Germany on average there is only for 13,7% of the children under age three a place in childcare facilities or a place at a childminder (day mother). Besides there's a big difference between the western and the eastern part of Germany. The countries in the east part of Germany have an average childcare-rate of 37% (for children under three). For children between three and six years the situation is better, because these children have a legal claim for a place in a kindergarten. But although this legal claim is existing, parents can not be sure of a place in a Kindergarten. Especially in the western part of Germany parents have problems to find a place in the kindergarten so they are able to work. And the situation is not getting better, when the children go to school. In Germany there's a big deficit on all-day-schools. They also not fully developed. The costs for a kindergarten differ in the different German states. In some states and cities the last year in kindergarten is free. In some kindergarten the fee depends on the income of the parents. In others the fee depends on the hours during which the child is cared. It varies in Germany from under 50 Euro per month up to 700 Euros and more.

The development of the childcare facilities and the all-day-schools is the business of the public. BDA, VKA and ZDH welcomed the latest decision of the „Bund-Länder-Arbeitsgruppe zum Ausbau der Kinderbetreuung“, that in 2013 there will be for 35% of the children under age three a place in a childcare facility. It is building a necessary basis for parents with small children to be able to work and find a good work-life balance. Because of the bad childcare situation in Germany companies have started to help their employees finding a solution to be able to work although they have small children. Nearly 30% of the companies are supporting their employees to find a place in a kindergarten, a day mother or a nanny. 3,5% of the companies in Germany have their own kindergarten or a creche. But although the companies started a lot of activities in the last years still a lot of all-day-schools and kindergartens have to be built so parents have the offer of a high quality childcare facility. Without a good working childcare system the reconciliation of work and family will not be possible.

CEC CONTRIBUTION

Sources of information:

- ULA (Deutscher Führungskräfteverband), member of CEC

It mainly depends on the regions. In the east of Germany, childcare facilities exist 'in abundance', whereas in the west, there is a lack of childcare facilities. In general, the facilities have often only restricted opening hours that are incompatible with the time schedules of many workers.

As a social partner, ULA encourages companies and further actors to promote more care facilities in order to be able to better conciliate working and family life. ULA is a member of the network 'Erfolgsfaktor Familie' and acts in this context as a multiplier. In general, ULA and its member associations write position papers and press releases in order to make the government, companies and the society aware of this issue. As a member of CEC-European Managers, ULA is acting not only on the national level but also on the European one.

Greece

CEC CONTRIBUTION

Sources of information:

- EASE (Association of Chief Executive Officers), member of CEC

In cooperation with the Greek Manpower Employment Organization (OAED), 5.342 unemployed women are directly promoted to employment, by means of creating 2.074 new jobs for unemployed women, subsidies to 2.074 new freelancers / practitioners, and providing working experience to 1.194 unemployed women.

The entrepreneurship of mothers with underage children or women taking care of disabled persons is especially facilitated by enabling them to state their house as their enterprise's seat, and to justify relevant expenditure (1/3 of operational costs, kindergarten costs etc.).

The same project also includes, for the first time, women who have been characterized as victims of trafficking in the category of beneficiary unemployed women.

The project is reinforced with events informing and sensitising bodies of the private sector, so as to achieve the full absorption of beneficiary women.

Iceland

EMPLOYERS' CONTRIBUTION

Source of information:

- SA (Confederation of Icelandic Employers), member of BUSINESSEUROPE

SA is of the opinion that availability of good child care facilities and a well organized school operation are prerequisite for the active labour market participation of most parents of young children. SA is nevertheless of the opinion that childcare should not be the responsibility of the enterprise. It is not their task to run or subsidize that kind of facilities. In Iceland those facilities are run by local or central authorities as well as individual associations or companies subsidized by the public authorities. In the view of SA it is important that the operational environment is friendly and the quality is under supervision.

Ireland

JOINT CONTRIBUTION

Sources of information:

- Trade unions: ICTU (Irish Congress of Trade Unions), member of ETUC
- Employers: IBEC (Irish Business and Employers Confederation), member of BUSINESSEUROPE

Ten years ago Ireland did not really have a childcare infrastructure. There were most certainly substantial structural challenges. During the last number of years enormous changes and improvements have occurred. The EOCP (Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme) followed on by the NCIP (National Childcare Investment Programme) has brought money to the sector and support for the supply-side: for the increase of the number of places. There has certainly been an increase in the number of places available and at the same time we have seen improvements in quality and standards in Ireland (including inspections), the design and implementation of new education and training courses for those working in the sector and a regionalised series of action plans for areas (through the County and City Childcare Committees). There is now a basic infrastructure around the country for care of young babies and children. Despite the enormous improvements, much is still left to do. The Irish system requires increased supply of atypical places: for example for school-aged children or children whose parents work part-time and so only require a place two days a week. The National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee includes Social Partners representation.

Challenges remain with regard to the affordability of childcare in Ireland. The Irish Government has pursued a strategy of increasing the universal payments for parents of children (the child benefit and early childhood supplement) to assist parents in bringing up their children in the manner in which they decide. Whilst both of these payments are obviously helping parents, they are not addressing the significant cost of childcare for parents who chose to work.

The lack of a comprehensive childcare infrastructure and the high costs of childcare in Ireland mean that in the short term work may not pay for many second earners in couple families, especially after they have had their second or third child. Childcare costs are 24.8% of average earnings in Ireland. (Babies and Bosses – Reconciling Work and Family Life, OECD 2007).

Social Partners have recommended that actions be taken to ensure that care services for children are more available and affordable.

The Social Partners may have a role in working together and with public authorities in developing a vision for care, a strategy and improvements on the practical roll-out. In Ireland the Social Partners have taken that lead: in 2005 with the report including recommendations on childcare and through the various Social Partnership Agreements.

Towards 2016 includes the adoption of the lifecycle framework and places the individual at the centre of policy development and delivery, by assessing the risks facing him/her, and the supports available to him/her to address those risks, at key stages in his/her life. The key lifecycle stages are identified as: Children, People of Working Age, Older People, and People with Disabilities. The document outlines a new framework within which to address key social challenges for each lifecycle stage. An agreed vision and key long-term goals for each stage of the lifecycle, together with agreed priority actions for the initial phase of the Agreement, are identified. A number of actions and goals exist with regard to care facilities.

Italy

JOINT CONTRIBUTION

Sources of information:

- Trade unions: UIL (Italian Union of Labour); CGIL (Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro); CISL (Italian Confederation of Workers' Trade Unions) members of ETUC
- Employers: Italian section of CEEP

The most important problem is that related to the lack of facilities and the inadequate arrangements of a series of economic incentives which allow families (and specifically women) to dedicate to children care without burdening on grandparents or other relatives. The lack of crèches (in many towns) always causes additional costs to utilize private kindergardens or, as said, often it causes the need of other family members.

At this regard, Collective Agreement meets its goal but, as a maximum, can grant rights but cannot effect the social organizations (the existence of firm crèches can be useful but cannot solve the problem). In the meanwhile costs can hardly be fallen on public or private employers, at least more than what already done.

In Italy a very large discussion going on about "welfare", historically focused on social security and on some social security cushions, so that we pay a larger attention to working conditions more than to development of social facilities or to incentives addressed to family, handicapped and elderly persons.

EMPLOYERS' CONTRIBUTION

Source of information:

- CNA (Confederazione Nazionale dell'Artigianato e delle Piccole e Medie Imprese) member of UEAPME

La loi italienne est en ligne avec les objectifs européens. Toutefois, afin d'accroître les instruments et les situations de tutelle ainsi que de conciliation, la valorisation du rôle des partenaires sociaux dans les accords collectifs ou les avis communs est un élément essentiel.

TRADE UNIONS' CONTRIBUTION

Source of information :

- CGIL (Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro); CISL (Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori); UIL (Unione Italiana del Lavoro) members of ETUC

Low network of nursery schools - only 6% of children have access to them – far from the Barcelona objectives, and the costs often unbearable of the private nursery schools for low income or single income families. It is necessary to adequately finance the national fund for the non self-sufficiency. It is necessary the planning and confrontation with the social partners.

Latvia

JOINT CONTRIBUTION

Sources of information:

- Trade unions: LBAS (Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia), member of ETUC
- Employers: LDDK (Employers' Confederation of Latvia), member of BUSINESSEUROPE

Municipal childcare facilities in Latvia are available for around 16% of children under 3 year age and around 75% for children in age from 3 to 7, which is not satisfactory situation. Private childcare facilities are in limited amount and are not affordable for the biggest part of population. Parents wait in long queues to get a place for their children in day childcare establishments. It does not facilitate their entering into a labour market after a parental/maternity leave.

Social partners should insist on a state financial support for local municipalities in order to provide social workers (who work with families with children) with additional monthly payment.

Lithuania

TRADE UNIONS' CONTRIBUTION

Sources of information:

- LPSK (Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation), LPSS (Lithuanian trade union "Solidarumas"), LDF (Lithuanian Labour Federation), members of ETUC

In Lithuania especially in rural area there is shortage of pre-school institutions. Children live with unemployed parents whose means of subsistence are only a small allowance they receive. A high fee of 47 EUR is imposed to educate children in state pre-school institutions considering people's minimum salary of 203 EUR in the country. Ordinary workers in city or rural area face a problem of family and work time reconciliation. Working hours of most pre-school institutions do not match regular working hours of parents. Besides, their salaries are too low to afford babysitter, etc. Unemployed persons or willing to take up training courses can not afford it or can't improve their professional qualification because of the working hours of pre-school institutions.

Luxembourg

JOINT CONTRIBUTION

Sources of information:

- Trade unions: CGT-L (General Confederation of Labour of Luxembourg) and LCGB (Luxembourg Christian Trade Union Confederation) members of ETUC
- Employers: FEDIL (Federation of Luxembourg's Industrialists), member of BUSINESSEUROPE; FDA (Fédération des Artisans et Chambre des Métiers), member of UEAPME

La situation n'est pas encore satisfaisante, mais est en train de s'améliorer avec davantage de création de crèches aussi bien dans le secteur privé que public au niveau régional et sectoriel.

Les maisons relais et l'éducation précoce au niveau communal a bien amélioré la situation pour les enfants à partir de trois ans. Concernant la garde d'enfants en dessous de trois ans il reste des efforts à faire.

Le poids des partenaires sociaux est assuré par leur représentation dans tous les organes décisionnels de la sécurité sociale qui est l'organe décideur pour l'assurance dépendance, l'assurance maladie etc.

The Netherlands

JOINT CONTRIBUTION

Sources of information:

- Trade unions: FNV (Federation of Netherlands Trade Union), member of ETUC
- Employers: VNO-NCW (Confederation of employers and industries), member of BUSINESSEUROPE

The last years the situation improved enormously in the field of availability, affordability and accessibility. Problem is still the fit between school times and childcare. But the government is working on it.

Currently we are discussing in the Social Economic Council the improvement of the statutory provisions for care for the elderly: the professional care facilities. In companies this is a relatively new topic.

Currently there is a small role, because before 2007 social partners were involved in the financing of childcare for workers. We made agreements about an employer's payment. But now employers have to pay a special tax for childcare (the finance one third of the costs of childcare).

We encourage the government to take measures to adjust the school times and to improve further the accessibility of child care.

Norway

JOINT CONTRIBUTION

Sources of information:

- Trade unions: LO (Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions); YS (Confederation of Vocational Unions), UNIO (The Confederation of Unions for Professionals); members of ETUC
- Employers: NHO (Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise) member of BUSINESSEUROPE; HSH (Norwegian Association of Trade and Services); KS (The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities), FAD – Ministry of Government Administration and Reform, Spekter, members of CEEP, HSH (Norwegian Association of Trade and Services), member of UEAPME

Figures from Statistics Norway (2006) show that 80.4 % of children aged 1-5 have a nursery school place. Full nursery school coverage has been a political target for several decades, but there are still not enough places for everyone. The building of new nursery school places has intensified in the last few years, however, and considerable resources have been invested in the sector. The parties expect the government to reach the target of full coverage during 2008.

“Other care facilities” include organised after-school activities, care homes/retirement homes, nursing homes etc. All school children aged 6-11 must be offered after-school activities linked to their school. The price of after-school activities varies but remains lower than the price of a nursery school place. With an aging population there is an increasing need for care facilities for this group. Again, there is great variation in terms of accessibility. The national average shows there is a great need for expansion.

The role of the parties is one of lobbying, partnership and, to a certain degree, “monitoring” the government’s priorities and performance. The parties that are directly involved in the relevant sector play a particular role with regards the developments in their respective sectors.

Poland

JOINT CONTRIBUTION

Sources of information:

- Trade unions: NSZZ “Solidarnosc” (Independent and self-governing trade union “Solidarnosc”), member of ETUC
- Employers: PKPP Lewiatan (Polish Confederation of Private Employers), member of BUSINESSEUROPE, ZRP member of UEAPME, KPP member of CEEP.

We think that the availability, affordability and accessibility of childcare facilities is very low. We don't have enough childcare facilities. Employees from our members complain on that fact. We think that the state should do more in that respect. State should also help companies if they wish to take this obligation and create childcare facilities.

The waiting lists in crèches and kindergartens are very long. The situation was checked in the area of Gdansk and there was any facility ready to take the child in immediately. The minimum waiting period was 8 months – most of these facilities could not give a date when the place will be available. The fee in the public facilities is approximately the equivalent of 85 Euro (the minimum salary around 250 Euro). There are also administrative barriers preventing from opening private crèches that should be eliminated.

Social partners participated in the preparation and evaluation of the Government's family policy. We have welcomed the idea to introduce less restrictive regulation that would allow the employer to open crèches and kindergartens. Presently we have noted cases when employers wanted to provide such help, even pay for it, but they could not pass the administrative obstacles.

We think that if we want to increase the rate of births and to change the demographic trends, thus the aging process of societies we need to motivate national governments to implement solutions that will help people to combine work and personal life.

We must state clearly that companies' objective is not the appropriate demography. Companies must be focused on how to secure and improve their situation on the market, how to produce competitive products. The state is responsible for level of births. If companies want to take on their shoulders the responsibility of the state, they should have the opportunity to do so, but we are of the opinion that they should also have incentives to take such responsibilities.

Portugal

JOINT CONTRIBUTION

Sources of information:

- Trade unions: UGT (General Workers Union); CGTP-IN (General Confederation of Portuguese Workers-National Inter Trade Union) members of ETUC
- Employers: CIP (Confederation of Portuguese Industry), member of BUSINESSEUROPE and APOCEEP, member of CEEP

In Portugal, there are, among others, the following monetary benefits and structures for child support: maternity leave benefit, adoption benefit, parental leave benefit, benefit for the assistance in sickness to underage offspring or disability, benefit for the assistance to profound disability or chronically ill family, pre-nativity allowance (created by Law n° 308-A/2007, 5th October), family allowance, deficiency bonus, benefit for attending a special education institute, monthly lifelong benefit, benefit for paying assistance to a third person and also day nurseries supported by the State.

The national situation with regard to the availability, affordability and accessibility of childcare facilities is far from being satisfactory.

The State must create more, better and affordable childcare facilities, as well as in the field of care for dependents and for older people. Therefore, it is essential and urgent to promote the progressive increase of the benefits attributed to families, as well as the adoption of more flexible and better paid leaves; a better maternity and paternity protection; a strengthened network of structures to care for children.

In the social partners' perspective, the existence of adequate care facilities is very important. To achieve better family support structures it is necessary to promote the dialogue and cooperation between all social agents. In this context, social partners insist for State investments in this area, including the creation of partnerships with the enterprises.

Romania

TRADE UNIONS' CONTRIBUTION

Sources of information:

- Cartel ALFA (National Trade Union Confederation), member of ETUC

We believe that our legislation regarding childcare is satisfactory.(some people even consider it excessive).

We think that our involvement as union organizations, and the involvement of other social partners should play a decisive role in making the authorities realize the necessity of such legal provisions.

Slovenia

EMPLOYERS' CONTRIBUTION:

Sources of information:

- ZDS (Association of Employers of Slovenia), member of BUSINESSEUROPE

Situation in Slovenia, as regards the availability, affordability and accessibility of childcare facilities is satisfactory in some ways while not suitable on other. Most of the childcare facilities (cca 95%) are public and financed by local communities and the parents. The price of the childcare service varies from municipality to the other. Percentage of parent's share to pay depends on their incomes, on the number of children in family, attending the nursery school... Childcare for second child in the family is free of charge.

Main problem regarding the childcare is the working hours of childcare facilities. Most of them are opened until 16 hours (until 16.30 hours at most), which is unacceptable, considering the fact most people work until 16 hours and that more and more people work until 17 or 18 o'clock. Working hours of the childcare is one of the most burning problems.

The most direct and efficient solution of the problem is the prolongation of working hours of childcare facilities, which would require additional funds. Another measure, which would abolish the problem in regard, is co-financing and developing private childcare facilities, which would pay more attention to the actual needs of the parents.

TRADE UNIONS' CONTRIBUTION:

Sources of information:

- ZSSS (Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia), member of ETUC

Yes. Since 1970s Slovenia has had a nation wide net of childcare facilities that are strongly regulated by state and strongly co-funded by local communities making sure that children are provided by good food, excellent staff, programme that promotes the mental and physical development etc. There is childcare facility for every child near where they live. Parents can choose also according to their preferences.

OK. It can still be a bit expensive. But this very year a bill has been proposed in the parliament to cover 100 % cost for every second child. The parents would have to pay just for the first child. What will happen we will see. A wonder if the local communities will have enough money. We don't want lower standard instead. As this is not paid by parental leave insurance, very little.

We can of course give our opinion and influence public opinion.

Spain

EMPLOYERS' CONTRIBUTION:

Source of information:

- CEOE (Confederation of Spanish employers) member of BUSINESSEUROPE

Pour le moment les services d'accueil aux enfants sont clairement insuffisants ce qui les rend, dans la plupart des cas, un service cher et avec peu de disponibilité.

Les partenaires sociaux ont sans doute un rôle à jouer surtout du point de vue des politiques actives du marché du travail pour améliorer la formation, les services d'intermédiation, la mobilité de telle façon à pouvoir lutter contre le déficit des travailleurs dans ces activités.

TRADE UNIONS' CONTRIBUTION:

Sources of information:

- CC.OO. (Trade Union Confederation of Workers Commissions); UGT (General Union of Workers); members of ETUC

Pour l'instant, les services et les infrastructures destinées aux enfants de moins de trois ans sont insuffisants vu leur grand nombre, bien qu'il existe l'engagement politique de les augmenter en vue de respecter les objectifs de Lisbonne ; mais, cependant ces objectifs dépendent des résultats électoraux car ils vont se matérialiser au cours de la prochaine législature.

Les partenaires sociaux participent de façon active à la rédaction, à la mise en œuvre et au suivi des toutes les mesures destinées à faciliter la Conciliation de la vie professionnelle, de la vie privée et de la vie familiale; nous avons contribué à l'élaboration de la LOI ORGANIQUE 3/2007, du 22 mars, relative à l'égalité effective des femmes et des hommes et de la LOI 39/2006.

Sweden

JOINT CONTRIBUTION

Sources of information:

- Trade Unions: LO (Swedish Trade Union Confederation); TCO (Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees) and SACO (Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations), members of ETUC
- Employers: Swedish Enterprise (Confederation of Swedish Enterprise), member of BUSINESSEUROPE; The Swedish section of CEEP (SALAR; SAGE, KFS, Fastigo and Pacta)

Sweden has well-developed childcare facilities. The country has both public and private providers of these services, although the public providers are in the majority. The state, municipalities and county councils bear the main responsibility for a well-functioning social welfare system.

There is a continuous need to develop childcare in pace with the development of society. Today, many people do not work traditional working hours during daytime and these employees also require access to functioning childcare. The opportunity to avail of subsidized home-help services is an additional aspect. It is also the case that some employers subsidize such services for employees with small children, or generally for the employees.

In Sweden, there is an act regulating the entitlement to leave for urgent family reasons and the majority of collective agreements offer the entitlement to leave of absence in connection with the sudden illness of close relatives. Sweden also has the Leave Compensation and Leave for Care of Relatives Act.

The principle role of the labour market parties is to help employees achieve a balance in live between private and working life, while also satisfying the requirements of businesses, through collective agreements, local policies and cooperation. In certain cases, the labour market parties can have a supporting role in relation to the players that supply various care services, primarily in the form of contacts at a local level.

United Kingdom

JOINT CONTRIBUTION

Sources of information:

- Trade unions: TUC (Trade Union Congress), member of ETUC
- Employers: CBI (Confederation of British Industry) member of BUSINESSEUROPE; CEEP UK, CEEP

UK Social partners share the Government's view that investment in early years services will benefit the whole of society. A lack of high quality, affordable childcare is a key barrier to women returning to the labour market after having children. It is also one of the main causes of the pay gap. Social partners believe that the primary responsibility for the provision and funding of accessible, affordable and high quality childcare lies with parents and the state. Parents want childcare that works for their particular family circumstances and the state is often in the best position to provide the range of services required. Employers can and do support parents but since investment in good quality childcare in the early years benefits the whole of society – in the education, health and criminal justice systems as well as in employment – the state must take the lead in providing it.

The UK government has recognised the importance of increasing the availability of high quality, affordable childcare to families, particularly through the National Childcare strategy, which has seen billions invested in childcare since its introduction in 1998. Initiatives have included the establishing of 1,300 Sure Start Children's Centres and 5000 schools providing extended services to children. Since 2004, all three and four year olds have been entitled to a free part time early education place, for 12.5 hours per week. This was extended to 15 hours per week in 2005, with the goal of 20 hours by 2010. The Government has also announced the goal of establishing a Children's Centre in every community and extended services in every school, by 2010.

Since 1997, the UK Government has invested £21 billion on expanding and strengthening childcare services. The social partners believe that the best way to ensure sufficient and sustainable childcare is to build on existing provision with public support for nurseries and childcare from the public and private sectors. Provision should be judged on the quality of the service not on who delivers it. The UK Government's approach of legislation and guidance to support this approach is the right one and should be demand-led to ensure that needs of children, parents, the elderly and carers are met.

However, the lack of affordable, high quality childcare continues to restrict women's abilities to access the labour market. High childcare costs are likely to force one partner to remain at home or undertake part-time work, disproportionately impacting on women. The UK has the second highest rate of women's part-time employment in the EU-15. Part time women workers face high levels of job segregation and low levels of pay.

TRADE UNIONS' CONTRIBUTION

Sources of information:

- Trade unions: NUT (National Union of Teachers), member of TUC

In short, the Government's Ten Year Childcare Strategy was published in 2004 and commits the Government to providing flexible childcare for all families with children aged up to 14 by 2010 and 15 hours a week early education for all three and four year olds for 38 weeks a year.

The NUT in its response to the Government's ten year strategy was concerned to draw a distinction between Child Care and early years education.

The terms "education" and "care" have different definitions, different training and education requirements and qualifications and should have different emphases and priorities in their delivery. Teachers are continually identifying opportunities to maximise learning, assess developmental needs and recognise opportunities for direct teaching. Carers, on the other hand, emphasise immediate well-being and different, sometimes wider, aspects of development.

The desire for greater integration in terms of the availability and accessibility of services to young children and their parents must not be interpreted as requiring a merger of those traditions. High quality education is underpinned by good standards of care. Good quality care inevitably leads to opportunities for learning. Integration must focus on easier access to services, not lead to a compromise in terms of provision in which the strengths of neither care nor education are apparent. Education and care overlap, but those involved in planning and organising provision for young children should continue to regard them as having distinct characteristics.

Whilst recognising that currently many children may have to be moved between settings providing childcare and those offering educational provision, in order to fit in with parents' commitments, this would not appear to be a valid reason for proposing such a radical shift in entitlement. Given the emphasis on wrap-around services throughout the rest of the document, it is essential that the entitlement to nursery education should be maintained. Priority must be given to the quality of the educational experience young children receive in Children's Centres and other settings which offer both education and childcare, in particular, the need for qualified teachers who are early years specialists. Where early years provision is designated as 'education', it should be provided by a qualified teacher.

Teachers are also able to take advantage of salary sacrifice schemes whereby they can choose to take an element of their salary at source in the form of Childcare Vouchers. This reduces their tax burden whilst contributing to their childcare costs.