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Monitoring Childcare Services for Young Children

A Discussion Paper

European Commission Network on Childcare and Other Measures to
Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities

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SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS

1. The Third Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1991-95) calls for the Commission to *"produce a Guide to Good Practice to supplement the Recommendation (on Child Care), giving guidelines on the information that Member States should collect regularly in relation to childcare services"*. As a basis for this, the Network has undertaken a study of routine data already existing on this subject in Member States, to improve the comparability of the descriptive data in use and definitions that have been adopted.
2. The report is primarily concerned with children before compulsory school age, taking account of one or two sub-categories, depending on the country - children of an age for pre-school education (nursery schooling, kindergarten) and younger children.
3. Three categories of information are examined: on needs, demand and provision of childcare services. Information about 'needs' provides an estimate of the maximum number of individuals who could formulate a request for childcare services during a given period. Information about 'demand' provides an assessment of satisfied and unmet demand. Information on 'provision of services' enables measurement that is quantitative and possibly qualitative. Finally, comparing measures of 'needs' and 'provision' enables an assessment to be made of the 'coverage rate of needs'.
4. On the basis of the routine information currently available in Member States, recommendations are made on information to be collected and methods of collection to be used. The subsequent analyses would permit cross-national comparisons and a longitudinal approach to understand developments over time.
5. Information on needs, demand and provision should be analyzed according to a number of specific parameters originating from the Recommendation, taking account of: the needs of parents who are employed, training or looking for work; children with special needs and living in lone parent households; the availability of services in rural and urban areas; diversity and affordability of services; the needs of workers employed in services, including their training.
6. The results of the study include:
 - * Direct measures of the numbers of children needing services are rare. Estimates depend on information available about the employment of women and/or mothers, which is often available. In contrast, information is rare about men or fathers and about parents who are training or looking for work.
 - * Information exists on demand, but it is often of little use. This is because 'explicit demand' is not always distinguished from 'latent demand' and information on preferences is often neglected.
 - * Data describing the provision of services lacks uniformity. Information is either indirect (the numbers of children enrolled) or gives the number of places. The

number of children enrolled (either at a given date or over a period of time) is an indicator of the use of services.

- * Methods of aggregating data on services are not always comparable. Data may be assembled and organised according to the types of services or according to the types of authorities or organisations responsible for the services.
- * Statistics on provision of services are not comprehensive, with the most complete data for services organised by public authorities, then for services receiving public subsidy and least complete data for private, unsubsidised services. The existence of a legal framework for the regulation of services is associated with better quality information.
- * Information on services is not always published, and is not always published at national level. The least satisfactory situation is where information is published in the annual reports of organisations responsible for services. Information is collected annually, but there are differences in how soon it is published, if at all.

7. Recommendations include:

- * Needs: national statistics with children as the unit of observation should be organised, and there should be data on the economically active population, female and male, taking into account their hours of work and their family responsibilities.
- * Demand: a sample survey should be organised every 4 years, taking account of the distinction between 'explicit' and 'latent' demand, preferences and the satisfaction of parents using services. The survey must be based on a sample of children, with information collected from a responsible adult (father, mother, guardian etc) in the household to which the child belongs.
- * Provision of services: there should be a standardised return of information on the services themselves and their use, to be completed for each individual service and for a common date or period. Collating this information on services into an 'inventory' of resources and use made of different types of services will be undertaken at the levels chosen by Member States (local, sub-regional, regional, national), but ensuring at least the production of national statistics and the possibility of making comparisons between Member States.
- * There should be a national publication, produced annually and applying to the same date in all Member States.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Third Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1991-1995) recognised the problem of inadequate information, when it committed the Commission "to produce a *Guide to Good Practice to supplement the Recommendation (on Child Care), giving guidelines on the information that Member States should collect regularly in relation to childcare services*". The objective of this discussion paper is to contribute to this task, and more generally to stimulate discussion on this important issue of what information should be collected about services. The Network hopes that this paper will make a contribution to the improvement in information at all levels within the Community.

In considering what information to include, we have been influenced by the Recommendation on Child Care¹ adopted by the Council of Ministers in March 1992. The Recommendation refers to a number of specific parameters which should influence the development of services and which it is necessary to include in the collection of information about services: affordability; availability in urban and rural areas; diversity of services; making services accessible to children with special needs and with lone parents; and the needs of workers in services, including appropriate training. The Recommendation's emphasis on the importance of services combining care and pedagogy/education adds further weight to the need for information to cover the full range of services for young children, including kindergartens and nursery schools.

The Recommendation is concerned with policies to promote the reconciliation of employment and caring for children. It proposes that initiatives are needed not only concerning services providing care for children, but also in three other areas: leave arrangements for parents, the environment and organisation of work and more equal sharing of family responsibilities between men and women. Improved information is needed in all of these areas. However, the measurement tools used to assess these four areas are different, which is why this paper is limited to information on 'childcare services' (which includes kindergartens and nursery schools).

The work we have undertaken on information is complex. It should be borne in mind that for most countries the perspective of equal opportunities represents a change in the traditional ways of collecting descriptive data and information on childcare services for young children. Indeed, the policy of equal opportunities is aimed at meeting the needs of women already in (or entering) the labour market, taking account of their family responsibilities. It also implies taking account of the aspiration of mothers and fathers for their children to benefit from the best conditions available in childcare services, which makes the question of quality of care central to the issue of equal opportunities and not peripheral.

¹For a discussion of the Recommendation, see *Employment, Equality and Caring for Children: 1992 Annual Report of the EC Network on Childcare and Other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities*, European Commission Equal Opportunities Unit: Brussels.

Such a change of perspective does not take place easily, especially as it implies a comparison of data from countries pursuing sometimes contrasting policy models: the 'private' model in which the care of children, family organisation and women's participation in the labour market are considered private decisions; and the 'public' model in which, by contrast, these issues are considered a public responsibility as far as their organisation and/or financing are concerned.

2. METHODOLOGY

Comparative international studies reveal not only differences, sometimes significant, between national systems, but also demonstrate that when confronted with similar problems, certain countries apply different solutions. But before interpreting the differences observed between countries, analyses should always begin by checking whether these observed differences are real - or whether they arise, on the contrary, from differences in the quality of information. In the latter case, the first source of possible variation is the **non-comparability of the descriptive data** used and the second source is the **non-comparability of definitions** used.

Our research is located downstream from these questions, since it is aimed at preparing a future comparative study. It analyses existing possible sources of variation between data and proposes changes so that the envisaged study can be conducted under the best conditions.

To assess the importance of these sources of variation, the Network has conducted a study of the routine data existing in the different countries relating to childcare services. A questionnaire was sent to the members of the Network. This report is based on twelve national reports drawn up in response to the questionnaire either by members of the Network or by their own experts. The following questions were examined: the identification of routinely collected data; the frequency of collection; the quality of available information; and the identification of limitations concerning the definition of terms used in relation to childcare services.

The report makes recommendations about the **standardisation of data** at European level and the **information needed** on childcare services in Member States. The proposals have been developed to permit international comparisons to be made in the near future at a given point of time (cross-sectional analysis) and also over time (longitudinal follow-up).

3. TERMINOLOGY

3.1 Foreword

In analyzing childcare services for young children in the framework of equal opportunities for women and men, we propose making a distinction between '*childhood policy*' and '*equal opportunities policy*'. In a '*childhood policy*', the elements relating to children must be analyzed taking account of their needs, regardless of their parents' occupational circumstances. Information relating to men and women should be analyzed in an '*equal opportunities policy*', taking into consideration the conditions of access to employment and training when individuals have family responsibilities.

This distinction is useful in choosing the appropriate unit of information: should information be collected about children, women, men or households? The choice of unit of observation must be justified according to the type of issue being considered.

A second preliminary consideration concerns the age groups of children. A distinction is made in all the Member States between two age groups - children of compulsory school age and younger children. The age of compulsory schooling varies between countries, from five to seven years. However, in some countries, such as France and Belgium, most children attend services providing pre-school education (nursery schools). In this case, three age categories are involved: children of primary school age; children of an age for pre-school education; and younger children. This report is primarily concerned with children who have not yet reached primary school age, taking into account one or two sub-categories depending on the country.

A third preliminary consideration leads us to determine who are the participants involved in childcare services. The three main participants are professionals and other persons who provide childcare services; parents, most often mothers; and finally, children. We shall attempt to take these three partners into consideration as far as possible in the identification of necessary information. It should be noted that the partners involved differ from one type of service to another. If, for example, the service aims primarily at protection or prevention, the children and their parents using it constitute a group with social problems and the professional experience of childcare workers will have little in common with that of professionals working in pre-school education available to all.

3.2 Terminology

Three categories of information are examined:

- * information about '*needs*' for childcare for young children;
- * information about '*demand*' for childcare services; and
- * information about '*provision*' of childcare services.

We have opted for an approach to assessing childcare services based on the notion of '*need*' for childcare services rather than on '*demand*'. An approach based on the

notion of '*need*' involves an analysis of the purpose of childcare and the identification of the users the programme seeks to serve. In contrast, an approach based on '*demand*' uses market models: it attempts to analyze the characteristics of the services likely to generate demand, regardless of their users.

Estimating the extent of the '*need*' for childcare in a population is thus tantamount to estimating the **maximum number** of individuals who could formulate a request for childcare service during a given period.

Information on '*demand*' is important as regards the use of childcare services and for estimating unmet demand (waiting lists, for example) for these services.

Information on the '*provision*' of services allows measurement of the services on offer, on a quantitative and, possibly, qualitative basis.

Lastly, comparing measurements of '*needs*' for childcare services and of '*provision*' of these services allows an assessment to be made of the extent of '*coverage rate of needs*'.

3.2.1 Needs

Needs vary over time in their nature, scope and their definition by society. For this reason we define them as "*a socially recognized right*" (a definition proposed by Irena Balaguer, the Spanish member of the Network), whether recognized legally or simply in practice.

The Council Recommendation on Child Care proposes that "*the needs of parents and children are taken into account when access to services is determined*" [Article 3]. In the context of a '*childhood policy*' that is distinct from an '*equal opportunities policy*', it is useful to identify separately the needs of families and children.

Addition to the English version

The author of the report, writing in French, uses two terms: '*garde*' and '*accueil*'. '*Garde*' refers to taking physical care of children, keeping children safe and secure care. '*Accueil*' is a broader concept; it refers to meeting the full range of children's needs, not only for safe physical care but also for education, socialisation etc. As the English language does not have words to distinguish between the narrow and broader concept of 'childcare' ('*garde*' and '*accueil*' in French), the French terms will be used throughout the rest of the report: '*Besoin de garde*' and '*besoin d'accueil*' refers to the 'need' for these different concepts of 'childcare'; '*demande de garde*' and '*demande d'accueil*' to demand'.

3.2.1.1 Families' needs

Parents must arrange for their young children to be cared for if they are not available to do so: families consequently have '*besoins de garde*'. At present, '*besoins de garde*' are primarily related to the economic activity of mothers and are recognized for

families in which both parents or the lone mother/father are employed. They can also be recognized for parents seeking employment or studying (cf. Council Recommendation, Article 2).

But parents can also look to childcare services for their young children to meet important social, educational, health or even psychological needs. Thus, non-parental care can satisfy not only '*besoins de garde*', but also complementary '*besoins d'accueil*'.

3.2.1.2 Children's needs

Children need non-parental (or extra-family) care if their parents are not available, regardless of the reason. We shall call this need a '*besoin d'accueil*'. This need is specific and varies depending on the age of the child.

'*Besoins d'accueil*' is not always linked to parental employment. For example, when one of the parents does not work and stays at home, the children can still have '*besoins d'accueil*' of a social, educational, health or psychological nature. Some children have '*special needs*' (disabled children or children from different cultural backgrounds) and still others must be protected ('*protection needs*').

Thus, non-parental care can provide for children's '*besoins d'accueil*', as well as '*special*' and '*protection needs*'.

3.2.1.3. The needs of childcare professionals

Workers in childcare facilities have '*professional needs*' concerning:

- * training, both initial and continuous;
- * working conditions;
- * pay and employment conditions; and
- * professional status.

3.2.2 Demand

The difference between '*need*' and '*demand*' lies in the fact that '*demand*' for a service involves an explicit measure taken to satisfy a need. In this definition, '*demand*' first involves awareness of a need for service. '*Demand*' is a need that is felt and expressed.

We make a distinction between '*explicit demand*' and '*latent demand*'. '*Explicit demand*' leads to a request for a service. '*Latent demand*' is demand which, for a number of reasons, has not led to a service being actively requested or sought. The reasons can be related to the type of service available, price, geographic accessibility or information circulating among potential users about the services themselves (care offered, quality of the care or the service, personnel, etc.). However, the demand may be expressed in response to specific questioning. For this reason, the only way to distinguish '*latent demand*' is to conduct a survey of a representative sample of families with a child in the age category under consideration.

'*Latent demand*' can nevertheless become explicit, for example, when the accessibility of service changes or when the services become more attractive. These changes can take place very quickly, which is why surveys should be conducted regularly.

Cultural values and representations about the family, children, women's role in society and women's employment are factors influencing the expression of demand.

3.2.2.1 Demande de garde

'*Demande de garde*' is generally expressed by families: this can take the form of an explicit request to childcare services or a request for assistance from relatives.

Demand varies according to social, professional and cultural features of the population: '*demande de garde*', for example, is not expressed in the same way by women in different occupations or with different employment statuses (for example, between self-employed women and women employees) or in different socio-cultural groups.

3.2.2.2 Demande d'accueil

'*Demande d'accueil*' can be expressed by families by emphasising educational, social, psychological or health aspects.

As '*demande d'accueil*' for very young children must be formulated by their 'representatives', (i.e. their parents), the '*besoins d'accueil*' of children cared for outside the home are not necessarily always expressed. Indeed, in some contexts, parents more readily express a '*demande de garde*' than a '*demande d'accueil*'.

It should also be noted that demand for social support and/or protection is often expressed by a professional or a service and rarely by families or children.

3.2.2.3 Professionals' demands

Childcare workers can formulate demands which could affect their work. Trades unions and professional associations play a major role here in transmitting demands and solving problems.

3.2.3 The provision of services

The Coordinator of the Network has taken a qualitative approach to this issue at European level, based not only on the national reports, but also on visits and meetings in the different Member States². This detailed information enables us to move to a phase of quantitative analysis.

What services can be included in this study? The Council Recommendation says that 'childcare services' mean "*any type of childcare, whether public or private, individual or collective*" (Article 2).

The Network has categorised the different types of services existing in Europe:

²EC Childcare Network (1988) *Childcare and Equality of Opportunity* (v/746/88), Brussels: European Commission (DGV).

nurseries, mixed age centres, family day carers, organised family day care, playgroups, kindergartens, pre-school education and outside school hours care. It is possible to distinguish different functions performed by these services:

- * *'garde'* and *'accueil'* of very young children (often under the age of three years) during the day;
- * preventive or protective care and support for families with problems;
- * pre-school education for children over three years of age;
- * *'accueil'*, out-of-school education and leisure time activities for children attending school;
- * playgroups and other services (e.g. kindergartens) separate from the school system.

These types of services can be: a) organized by public authorities; b) financed but not organized by public authorities; or c) totally private.

4. DATA ON NEED, DEMAND AND PROVISION

4.1 Data on needs

The nature of needs varies within the population of the same country. The identification of needs by public authorities varies over time and according to the partners involved. It is consequently very probable that the types of needs recognized in the twelve Member States vary. We decided therefore to select several population categories for whom information would be a priority within the context of the Equal Opportunities Programme.

'*Besoins de garde*' can be directly measured by the number of children whose parents are employed, studying, following a course of training or unemployed. This measurement is vital for estimating the maximum number of childcare places.

Lacking this information, '*besoins de garde*' can be estimated: by the number of mothers with children aged 0-6 (or 0-2; 3-6) or by the number of women between 20 and 44 years of age who are employed, studying, following a course of training or unemployed. It should nevertheless be kept in mind that the proportion of employed women with children varies between countries, making the last indicator less than perfect when comparing countries.

'*Besoins d'accueil*' may well concern all children, depending on their socially recognized rights. If a society recognizes that all children have the right to education, these needs can be estimated on the basis of the total number of children in the age category.

The '*needs of professionals*' can be estimated on the basis of the number of workers in each type of childcare service. This information provides a basis for arranging continuous training for all workers or planning initial training needs.

4.2 Data on demand

Demand satisfied by the services is measured by the number of children using the services (i.e. the *number of children enrolled*). It should be noted that the users of a service do not necessarily have a choice about the type of service they would prefer.

Unmet demand can be estimated through waiting lists. There is variation in whether lists are kept and the way they are kept, but waiting lists provide information only on unmet '*explicit demand*' for services. The value of this information diminishes when there is a large gap between demand and provision of services: when there are few places available in relation to demand, families no longer seek places, knowing it is useless to do so.

Demand can also be measured through surveys of a sample of the population. In this case, attention must be paid to distinguishing '*explicit demand*' and '*latent demand*'.

The ratio between '*latent demand*' and '*explicit demand*' can only be estimated if such surveys are organised for this purpose. These surveys should also be conducted regularly because of movements between these two types of demand.

4.3 Data on provision

The data sought are measurements describing services: their number, their capacity and their personnel. We are seeking measurements that distinguish between the different types of services (nurseries, organised family day care, mixed age centres, etc.). This information enables account to be taken of the diversity of conditions in which children receive care: home care, centre-based care, mixed age care, etc.

Services should also be distinguished according to economic accessibility (subsidised and non-subsidised) and the type of organising authority (private and public).

4.4 Coverage rate for '*besoins d'accueil*'

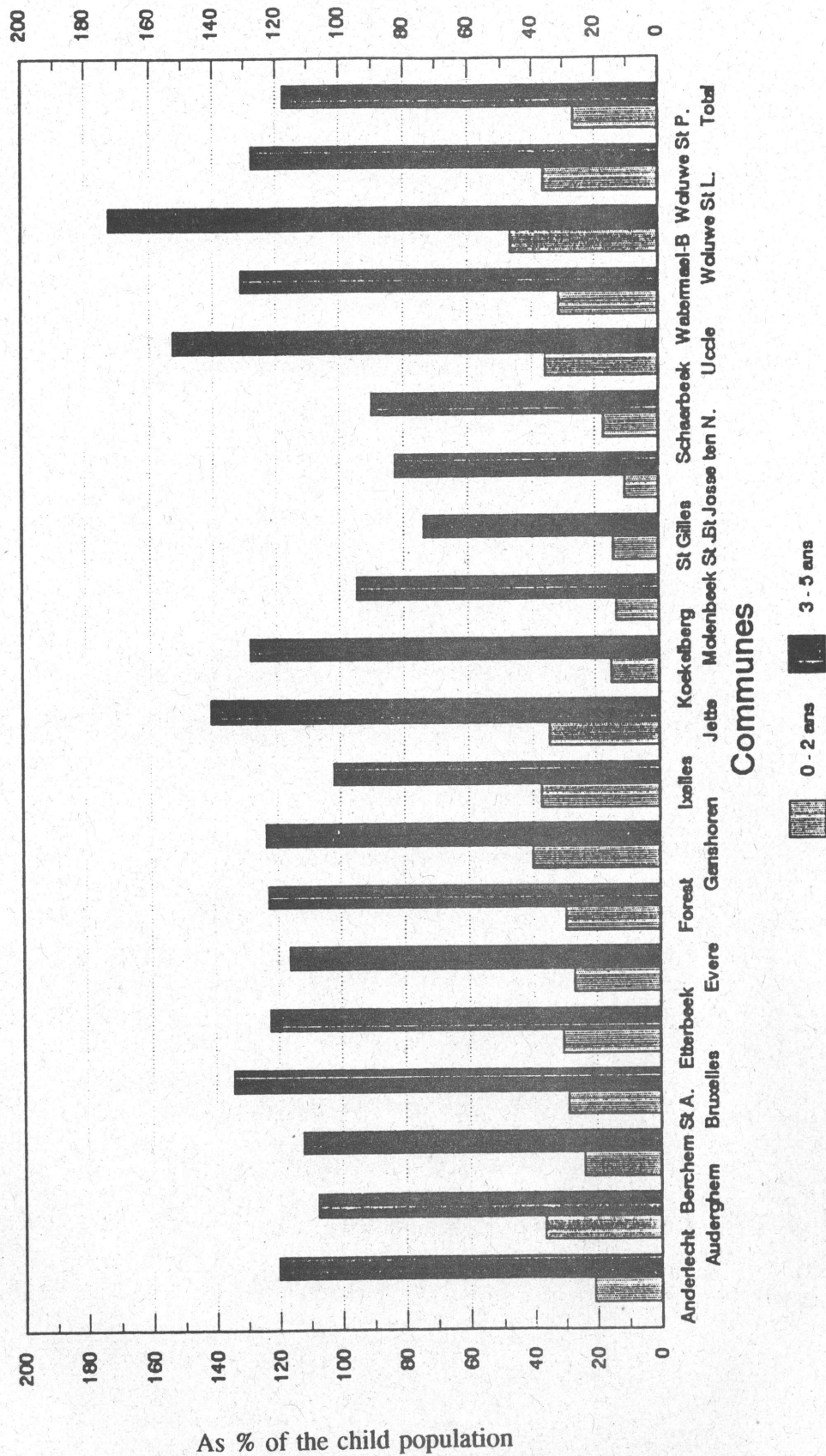
This '*coverage rate*' can be calculated by comparing measurements estimating the need for these services and measurements of the provision of service. The coverage rate is a relative measurement; it is expressed as a percentage. This relative measurement enables comparisons to be made between situations which differ in scope.

Figure 1 is an example of this approach. The '*coverage rates*', in relation to the needs of children under three years of age and between the ages of three and five, are presented for the 19 communes of the Brussels Region of Belgium³. In Brussels, children under age three are cared for primarily in nurseries; children between the ages of three and six attend nursery schooling ('*école maternelle*'). '*Coverage rates*' are calculated by dividing the number of children enrolled in nurseries or nursery schooling in each commune by the number of children aged 0-2 and 3-5 respectively who are living in each commune.

Figure 1 shows a discontinuity between the services for the two age groups. This can be explained by the fact that services for children under three are intended to meet '*besoins de garde*' while nursery schooling is intended to meet educational needs. The Figure also makes it possible to describe inequalities between the different communes of the Region. Without entering into details, we note a correlation between the '*coverage rates*' for the two age groups: the communes in which the '*coverage rate*' is higher for children under three also show higher rates for children between three and five.

³For further information see Humblet, P.C. and Dubois, A. (1992) *L'accueil et l'accompagnement du jeune enfant dans la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale*, Brussels: Commission Communautaire Française - Observatoire de l'Accueil et de l'Accompagnement du Jeune Enfant.

Figure 1 : Coverage rate for 'besoins d'accueil'
 For children aged 0-2 and 3-5 years
 Communes in the Brussels Region



5. ANALYSIS OF DATA AVAILABLE IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES ON SERVICES FOR PRE-SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

5.1 Analysis of data on needs

5.1.1 Direct measurements of '*besoins de garde*'

Establishing such measurements requires statistics in which children are the observation unit and in which the employment status of their parents is taken into consideration. For most of the sources of national data mentioned (the most important of which is the census conducted every ten years), Network members emphasise that children do not appear as a unit of observation but are taken into account as members of a household. There are consequently virtually no statistics on children directly reporting their '*besoins de garde*' and '*besoins d'accueil*'.

Observation 1: Information directly measuring needs is scarce.

Statistics nevertheless do exist in Spain (S) and Germany (G): they are not direct measurements but are estimates based on surveys.

S: '*Childhood in Statistics*' (1991), published by the Spanish Ministry for Social Affairs, concerns children and young people under age 18.

G: '*Mikrozensus*' is a national survey of 1% of German households which records information on children under the age of eight and on members of the household, according to the family status, activity and employment status of the family's reference person (not necessarily the mother).

Surveys on the needs of households with children are nevertheless conducted regularly in countries such as Denmark (DK) and France (F). They are not necessarily intended to provide a quantitative estimate. They sometimes do not differentiate between the '*besoin de garde*' and '*demande de garde*'. Municipalities are also sometimes encouraged to collect information on '*besoins de garde*' at their level.

DK: The Danish member of the Network notes that the terms '*need*' and '*demand*' seem to be used indiscriminately in terms of the child's right to a place in a childcare service. Denmark conducts numerous surveys and research projects on all aspects of provision for young children. The results of two national surveys on general demand (or needs) are available: they were conducted (in 1985 and 1989) on a representative sample of the population of parents with at least one child under seven years of age.

F: In France, a survey of households is conducted every seven years by INSEE, which provides estimates of families' '*besoins de garde*'. The Secretariat of State for the Family has also launched an operation known as

'Label Petite Enfance' encouraging municipalities to establish an overall childcare policy. It involves a preliminary phase of quantitative and qualitative analysis of the population's childcare '*besoins d'accueil*'.

5.1.2 Indirect estimates of families' '*besoins de garde*'

For want of direct measurements, indicators may be used: the number of mothers with children in the age category under consideration (for example, under age six) who are employed, following a course of training, or seeking employment. One source of error with this indirect measurement arises from the fact that mothers can have more than one child in the age category in question.

European Community: The Labour Force Survey is conducted in all twelve Member States. It is a valuable source of information for international comparisons, especially because it takes account of dependent children according to age. This source of information is valuable for statistics at national level, but in certain countries it raises problems for the measurements obtained at sub-regional level (Belgium, for example).

The most frequent indicator is the number of **women with an occupation**. In this case, two sources of error are combined: it is not known how many children in the age group under consideration that these women have, and the percentage of mothers among women with an occupation varies according to region, economic development and country.

There are numerous sources of statistics on women's employment in some countries. The experts highlight the shortcomings concerning specific information on family responsibilities, for example on mothers and their children.

Observation 2: Statistics reflecting the sexual division of labour have been developed in all countries. Statistics on women's employment nevertheless often do not take into account the sexual division of labour in the family, nor family responsibilities.

5.1.3 Measurements of children's '*besoins d'accueil*'

Observation 3: Measuring educational needs is straightforward: demographic data provide such measurement.

Most countries recognize the right to education before compulsory school age. Demographic data consequently provide sufficient information concerning the total number of children of each age who could benefit from this right. This is the case in all the Member States: basic demographic data provide the number of births, allowing officials to make medium-term projections regarding the educational needs of each age group.

In some countries, all children are recognized to have the right to an education at an

early age. This right is recognized and de facto applied for children over age two in Belgium, France and Italy.

All children are recognized to have this right in Denmark and Spain, regardless of their age. But the exercise of this right is subject to the number of places made available by local authorities in the former case, and is only applied de facto from the age of four years in the latter.

Where the right to services is more limited, for example to children with 'special needs' or 'protection needs', measuring the extent of these needs is problematic unless they are clearly defined and a system exists for assessing the extent of needs.

5.1.4 Measurements of the training needs of professionals

The initial and continuous training of professionals who work in services with young children must be the object of medium-term projections. With the exception of Denmark, this seems possible only for personnel working in the educational system.

Observation 4: Pre-primary schooling services generally publish information on their personnel. In contrast, other childcare services rarely publish information about their personnel.

DK: Denmark annually publishes the number of persons employed and the number of full-time equivalent posts in terms for each type of service, including family day care.

5.2 Analysis of data on demand

Observation 5: There are surveys on demand. They are not always satisfactory due to lack of precision in defining the object of measurement.

5.2.1 'Explicit demand'

Two countries collect data on '*explicit demand*': the Flemish Community of Belgium (B-FC) and Denmark.

B-FC: An annual survey has been conducted since 1988 by the public authority responsible for the supervision and financing of childcare services (*Kind en Gezin*), using a representative sample of families with a child between the ages of three months and three years. The percentage of families using childcare services and a breakdown showing the number of children according to type of service (including the family and relatives) and the frequency of use are calculated for each province. However, neither '*latent demand*' nor satisfaction with the childcare service used are covered in the survey.

DK: The results of two surveys (1985 and 1989) conducted on a representative

sample of the population of parents with at least one child under age seven are available. They provide detailed and varied information on where children, from birth to age two and between the ages of three and six, spend their day. They also provide information on the use of all types of care (including the family, relatives and maternity leave) in the population.

5.2.1.1 '*Explicit demand*' met by public and private services

The most readily available data are related to demand that is met either by the services overall or a part of the services: this is the '*number of children enrolled*', i.e. the number of children using these services. Information on the number of children enrolled is analyzed in the section on provision (5.3) because it is most often used to describe the provision of services.

I: In Italy certain municipalities conduct surveys on the extent to which the provision of services meets families' needs: questions deal with needs at quantitative and qualitative levels in order to detect new needs for services.

5.2.1.2 '*Explicit demand*' not met by services

Observation 6: Estimates of unmet '*explicit demand*' fail to take account of the shortfall on the provision side or of the satisfaction of the users of the services.

Two methods are used to provide quantitative measurements of unmet demand: waiting lists and surveys.

The use of **waiting lists** as an indicator of unmet demand is not of interest in a period of shortage, i.e. when demand greatly exceeds the provision of services (see 4.2).

Several countries have information on waiting lists. These lists nevertheless do not always cover the country as a whole. These countries are: Denmark, Italy, Luxembourg (L), the Netherlands (NL), Portugal (P) and the United Kingdom (UK).

DK: Statistics on waiting lists are most comprehensive in Denmark. Every child has the right to be placed on the waiting list of his or her commune. Entries on a waiting list are defined as requests by the 'eligible' population of the commune (criteria vary depending on the municipality) for actual 'here and now' enrolment. Lists are local and public but are not published nationally. Additional information has been collected by telephone in 1987, 1991 and 1993 providing details on the age groups of the children, the type of service wanted and the length of the wait (after the end of maternity leave or after moving house): this information is published nationally.

IT: In certain regions (e.g. Emilia-Romagna), registration forms for services are collected between the months of March and May so as to plan the use of the services. As there are more applications than available places, unmet demand can consequently be estimated.

L: In certain areas data are accumulated over the year: a centralised registration service totals the number of applications received for the city of Luxembourg. This information is not published.

NL: Two agencies record detailed information about childcare services, including waiting lists. The system in use does not prevent double counting.

UK: The Department of Health surveys local authorities. It records information on childcare services and waiting lists on 31 March of every year.

List keeping and the methods used are variable. Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom have a shortage of places and information obtained from waiting lists is not considered completely reliable in these countries.

Unmet '*explicit demand*' is sometimes estimated by means of a survey of the population.

NL: Many surveys have been conducted in the Netherlands to determine unmet demand. The results obtained by the different surveys do not tally and are therefore not considered very reliable.

5.2.2 '*Latent demand*'

'*Latent demand*' is sometimes estimated by surveys. This type of demand constitutes a 'pool' of potential users. They have not made an explicit request for a service - but could do so either because they are no longer satisfied with the solution being used (for example, staying at home to care for the child), or because the accessibility or quality of childcare services has changed.

DK: Denmark conducted two detailed surveys in 1985 and 1989 which included several questions on the ideal, preferred type of childcare. These two surveys also produced detailed information on demand (or needs, see above) and on unmet demand.

UK: a Government survey was undertaken in 1990 which included the preferred type of childcare, irrespective of the actual availability of services. The results of the survey are not yet available.

5.3 Analysis of data on provision

Observation 7: It is usually possible to describe the provision of services, but the quality of the information is very variable.

5.3.1 Analysis of routine data

Observation 8: The provision of services is described either through data on service capacity or through information on the number of children enrolled in services.

Data describing the provision of services are sometimes expressed in terms of 'capacity'. 'Capacity' generally means the number of places in services, which is equivalent to the number of children who can be accommodated simultaneously on a full time basis.

Provision is also described on the basis of the '*number of children enrolled*' in services. The '*number of children enrolled*' means the number of different children using the service. These are indirect data on provision since they describe demand met by services rather than the number of places. The number of children enrolled is sometimes higher than the number of places when some places are used on a part time basis.

The following countries have data on services for children under age three:

- a) on *capacity and* the *number of children enrolled*:
 - Belgium (both Communities)
 - Denmark
 - Italy
 - Luxembourg
 - Netherlands
 - Portugal
 - United Kingdom.
- b) on *capacity or* the *number of children enrolled*:
 - France (capacity)
 - Germany (enrolled)
 - Greece (capacity)
 - Ireland (enrolled)
- c) Spain has no national data on places available or on the number of children enrolled for children under the age of three. Information is available for certain regions or cities (e.g. Barcelona) for services financed by public authorities.

For services for children over three years of age and under compulsory school age, data on capacity are harder to come by.

The following countries have data:

- a) on *capacity and* the *number of children enrolled*:
 - Denmark
 - Italy

- Portugal
- Spain

b) on the *number of children enrolled*:

- Belgium
- France
- Germany
- Ireland
- United Kingdom.

Observation 9: '*Capacity*' is more frequently used to describe services for children under three years of age.

In several countries (for example, Belgium, France and the United Kingdom), childcare services for children under three years of age are the responsibility of Social Affairs, Social Welfare or Health authorities. Like hospitals and services offering shelter, these childcare services are then measured by capacity, i.e. by number of places.

B: the term 'bed' ('*lit*') has long been used as a measure of capacity.

Observation 10: The fact that the principal unit of measurement used is the number of places or the number of children enrolled is not due to chance but is related to different systems of organisation.

B: In Belgium the main information on childcare services for children under three years of age is '*capacity*'. This is because the financing of these services is calculated in terms of the number of authorised places. The main information on services for children over age three (pre-primary schooling) is the '*number of children enrolled*'. These services are primarily educational in nature, modeled after schools to meet a right to education. The number of places is determined by demand since the financing of these services is calculated in terms of the total number of children enrolled on 1 October of the school year.

Observation 11: Descriptive data on services (in terms of capacity or children enrolled) are usually published according to the type of service: nursery, organised family day care, family day carers, mixed age centres and so on.

This information is nevertheless not available in certain countries, where it is then related solely to the authority organising the service.

L: In Luxembourg data on provision are consolidated under the heading 'foyers de jours conventionnés' (i.e. centres which have made a contract with the Government): each centre can offer different categories of services, from nursery to out-of-school hours care for children attending primary or secondary

school. Data on other services (which do not have an agreement with the Government) are organised according to their management body, for example: religious communities, Commission of the European Communities or communes.

P: In Portugal data concerning service accessible to children under three years of age are not published and are only available through contacting the institutions (public or private) organising these services.

Observation 12: The data published in each country on childcare services for young children do not always cover all care and education services that actually exist. The published data can therefore be under-estimates.

S: There is no centralized data collection on childcare services for children under age two in Spain. No information is recorded on private services in any central register. Several cities record information on publicly funded services.

IRL: In Ireland there is no centralized data collection on all services; no information is recorded on family day carers at present.

NL: There are two sources of information in the Netherlands, the SGBO and the CBS. The SGBO excludes data relating to playgroups (61,470 part time places) which are not considered useful to working parents; the CBS includes playgroups but excludes non-subsidised centres (7,605 places).

Observation 13: The most frequently collected and published information concerns services organised by public authorities or receiving public funds.

Information is most accessible in the case of services organised by public authorities: it can be found in national statistics, national resource inventories, etc.

DK: The Danish Statistics Institute draws up an inventory of all social services accessible to the population. These include care and educational services for young children. Descriptive data concern services organised by communal authorities as well as services supervised by the communes.

In the case of countries where services are financed (subsidised), but not organised, by public authorities, information is sometimes less accessible. The necessary information can often only be found by referring to the activity reports of supervisory authorities.

B: In Belgium data on childcare services are no longer published nationally. In the French Community, data are not published in a Community statistical report, but are published in the annual activity report of the Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance (ONE), the supervisory authority for childcare services.

G: In Germany data on public services are published (not in full) in national statistics on young people ('*Jugendhilfstatistik*'); data on private services are collected but not published.

P: Portugal publishes no national data on childcare services for children under three years of age. Information is available from each organising authority, public or private.

5.3.2 Quality of information

By quality of information we mean its precision, comparability and uniformity. Several observations can be made on this subject.

Observation 14: '*Capacity*' is generally defined uniformly from one country to another.

'*Capacity*' is generally understood or defined as the **number of children the service can care for at any one time**. The criteria on which assessments determining capacity are based have not been analyzed from one country to another.

Observation 15: The '*number of children enroled*' is not defined uniformly. It can be defined at a point of time or cumulatively.

In some countries the '*number of children enroled*' corresponds to the number of children enroled at a given date, i.e. **snapshot data**. It is then possible to make an analysis of children according to the childcare used in the population. If the children's age is also taken into consideration, it is possible to calculate the percentage of children enroled in different types of services for different age groups.

DK: Denmark publishes annual tables showing, for January 9 of each year, the number and the percentage of children enroled and the rate of use of services, by age of children and type of service.

I: In Italy, percentages are published by age group (birth to 3, 3-6) as at November 15.

NL: The CBS records the number of children who have used centre-based services during the week of the survey.

P: The figure recorded is for 31 December.

UK: The number of users of nurseries provided by local authorities is given for March 31; the number of children enroled in pre-primary schooling is recorded on the third Tuesday of January in all regions with the exception of Scotland, where it is recorded for the month of September.

In other countries the '*number of children enroled*' corresponds to the number of

different children who have used the service in the course of a given period: these figures are **cumulative data**. This procedure is used in Belgium and also seems to be used in the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

B: In the French Community of Belgium the number of children enrolled is recorded yearly by ONE as cumulative data, which reflects the number of children using the service in the course of a calendar year. This is a measure of use but does not allow a calculation of the number of children in each type of service: a child using two services in the same year is counted twice.

Observation 16: Inconsistency can exist between decentralised sources of information within the same country.

Regional and national authorities sometimes use criteria and definitions showing little consistency with each other.

I: In Italy the Network member emphasises the lack of uniformity and comparability of data collected by municipalities.

NL: Within the framework of a programme of measures to stimulate services, the **Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten** (association of communes of the Netherlands) has published data on services subsidised by public funds and on non-subsidised services considered useful for employed parents (thus excluding playgroups). These statistics were not consistent with the CBS statistics in 1990.

Observation 17: The existence of regulations controlling childcare services facilitates the collection and recording of information.

S: Prior to enactment of the education law (*Ley de Ordenacion General del Sistema Educativo = LOGSE*) on 3 October 1990, no national body existed for the authorization or registration of childcare centres for young children, with the exception of Catalonia.

G: The new law on children and young people (*Kinder- und Jugendhilfegesetz*) enacted in January 1992 is expected to improve the collection of information on provision, needs and demand for services.

IRL: The Child Care Act (1991) is expected to make it possible to obtain comprehensive information on services for children under six years of age.

L: The Network member from Luxembourg notes the absence of an authorization and registration procedure for private services, which explains the absence of data on these services.

5.3.3 Frequency of collection and of publication of information

The frequency of collection of information should be distinguished from the frequency of publication. Information is collected annually in most countries, with the exception of Ireland, where collection depends on organising authorities.

Observation 18: Information is generally collected on an annual basis, but is often not published until more than a year later.

The publication of findings is usually annual, but some experts note lengthy publication delays (four years in Italy, three years in the Netherlands).

Data are published at regular intervals in some countries (every four years in Germany) or are not published for certain categories of services (Greece, Spain and Portugal).

6. Recommendations

6.1 Main recommendations

6.1.1 Recommendations relating to data on needs

In some countries, '*besoins d'accueil*' are considered to concern all children living in the country. In this case, it is enough to determine the number of children in each age category: routine demographic statistics are available in all countries.

In the countries in which '*besoins d'accueil*' are not considered to concern all children in the age category under consideration, but are limited to '*besoins de garde*' or certain special needs, it is adequate to collect information which allows estimates to be made of the scope of these needs and their variation according to geographic, cultural, economic and social factors.

In view of the shortcomings noted in relation to information on needs, it is recommended:

1. To organise national demographic statistics so as to:

1a) make children a unit of observation.

1b) record various parameters concerning their everyday lives, namely:
the type of household in which they live;
the activity of their father and mother;
the number of their siblings;
whether they receive non-parental care.

1c) record these parameters in terms of children's age, sex, place of residence (region, sub-region), type of community (rural, semi-urban, urban), disabilities and special needs such as those related to language, ethnicity or socio-cultural group.

2. To organise national statistics on the labour force so as to:

2a) show women and men according to the duration and type of economic activity (employment, training, job-seeking).

2b) show women and men according to their family responsibilities (dependent children according to age, dependent adults according to level of dependence).

6.1.2 Recommendation relating to data on demand

In view of the shortcomings noted in relation to information on demand, it is recommended that a regular survey should be conducted of families' *'explicit'* and *'latent demand'* for services.

This survey should include the following features:

1. It should be organised at regular intervals, every four years;
2. It should be based on a sample of children between birth and seven years of age (and not a sample of households), to include all household situations actually encountered by children. The interviewee should be a responsible adult member of the household (the child's father or mother, guardian, other relative, etc.);
3. Questions should be put to users and non-users of childcare services at the time of the survey and should take account of: the family's socio-cultural, demographic and employment characteristics, as well as the type of community where the family lives; the special needs and disabilities of the children.
 - 3a) for users of services, questions should explore: the type of service used (including multiple use of several services and whether the services used are public or private), satisfaction with the service, preferences with regard to type of service and the duration of use.
 - 3b) for non-users of services, questions should explore: unmet demand and possible preferences with regard to type of service.

6.1.3 Recommendation relating to data on the provision of services

It is recommended that:

1. Each country should enact a national regulation concerning the registration, authorization and supervision of public and private childcare services.
2. Each country should collect a limited amount of information, standardised and common across all Member States on services, covering resources and use. This information could be collected through the use of a simplified form serving as an annual report on the activity of each service. The information collected in this way could be used to compile an 'inventory' of resources and use made of different types of service. This inventory could be produced and published for different levels - local, sub-regional, regional, national - according to the wishes of national governments, and at European Union level by the European Commission.
3. The form should collect information for each individual service and on a given date (a specific day) comprising at least the following:
 - 3a) details of the service (urban/rural, type of service, public or private financing), the number of opening hours per week, the number

of places (if this notion is meaningful).

- 3b) the number of **children enroled** on that date, according to their age (in years) and whether they attend on a full time or part time basis.
- 3c) the number of **persons employed**, according to their profession (level of training), sex, age, hours of work (full time or part time), the number of posts occupied on a full-time equivalent basis.
- 3d) the average parental payment for the children enroled on that date.

6.2 Other recommendations

1. 'Snapshot data' on the '*number of children enroled*' should be collected rather than cumulative data.
2. A common reference date for collecting information should be chosen for all Member States. If this proves impossible, a common period (for example, end of the year) should at least be chosen in which to locate the reference date for collecting information.
3. Information should be collected on services that are not publicly subsidised which can be compared with information on services that are subsidised or organised by public authorities.
4. Information should be collected on the places assigned for children with special needs.
5. Information on childcare services should be issued annually in national publications.