

**THE STRUCTURAL FUNDS OF THE
EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND CHILDCARE
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO RURAL REGIONS**

**European Commission Network for Childcare
and other measures to reconcile working and family responsibilities.**

**Equal Opportunities Unit, Directorate -General V - Employment,
Industrial Relations and Social Affairs**

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION NETWORK FOR CHILDCARE
and other measures to reconcile working and family responsibilities.**

**EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES UNIT, DIRECTORATE-GENERAL V -
EMPLOYMENT, INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

**THE STRUCTURAL FUNDS OF THE
EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND CHILDCARE
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO RURAL REGIONS**

**Report of Working Group on Structural Funds and Rural Childcare
1992**

**WORKING GROUP : Irene Belaguer, Spain: Bronwen Cohen ,U.K:
Vivie Papadimitriou, Greece: Eduarda Ramirez, Portugal:
Anne McKenna, Ireland, Coordinator of Report.**

This text has been prepared for use within the Commission. It does not necessarily represent the Commission's official position.

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION NETWORK FOR CHILDCARE
and other measures to reconcile working and family responsibilities.**

1992

**THE STRUCTURAL FUNDS OF THE
EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND CHILDCARE
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO RURAL REGIONS**

Report of Working Group on Structural Funds including Rural Areas.

CONTENTS

Executive summary

A. Introduction	Page 1
B. The Community's Structural Funds	5
C. The need for Childcare	12
D. Rural Childcare Models	19
E. The Structural Funds and Childcare	25
F. Conclusions and Recommendations	35

Appendices

1. Relation of childcare facilities to Fund Objectives.	40
2. Possible application of Structural Funds to childcare	41

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Structural Funds of the European Community: The Report is concerned with the contribution of childcare facilities to the objectives of the Structural Funds of the European Community and the utilisation of these funds in developing childcare provision particularly in non-advantaged areas, including rural regions. Its aim is to clarify and make more accessible the relevant E.C. technical and legal documents, and thus give practical guidance and information to groups seeking European funding for programmes relating to the reconciliation of family and work responsibilities.

The three financial mechanisms of the Structural Fund are the E.S.F.(European Social Fund), the E.R.D.F (European Regional Development Fund) and the E.A.G.G.F, (European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund). This funding is disbursed to each member state via **Community Support Frameworks (CSF's)**, the five year developmental plans agreed between a member state and the Community.

As a result of the reform of the Structural Funds they are enabled to reserve a part of their budget to carry out their own initiatives, referred to as **Community Initiatives**. These issue directly from Brussels and fund additional measures of significant interest to the Community, which have not been sufficiently covered by the Member States in their respective CSF's

The need for childcare: The reform of the Structural Funds coincided with the publication in 1988 of the European Childcare Network's first comprehensive report *Childcare and Equality of Opportunity*. This Report found a general shortfall of childcare provision, (including preschool education), as well as considerable differences in the level of services between Member States. It provided considerable evidence of the direct economic impact of childcare provision in addition to its educational and social impact.

The shortfall of childcare provision is relatively greater in rural areas. At a time of changing E.C. agricultural policy where a reduction of over-production in agricultural output is to be encouraged and accomplished through diversification of the rural economy, it does not make sense to neglect the potential economic contribution of women. In addition the relative scarcity or absence of childcare services including preschool education is further evidence of rural deprivation at a time when E.C. policy hopes to stem the out-migration of young families.

Innovative services: There has been a welcome development of innovative programmes for rural childcare in some Member States. To give one example, In France, a nation wide organisation for rural development has recently adopted an extensive programme of childcare facilities and another national organisation for the promotion of parental creches has set in place a network of 40 rural creches in the last ten years: examples could be cited from other member states. Three characteristics of such innovative rural provision are: (i) their multifunctional nature (part-time and full-time daycare, drop-in services and after school care for children and training and self development courses for mothers); (ii) their integration of parental participation with professional (pedagogical) input; and (iii) their inclusion of personal and vocational development of women as an integral part of rural development and of childcare as an integral part of both.

Childcare and the Structural Funds: The contribution of childcare services to the objectives of the Structural Fund has received some recognition within previous funding programmes. In general this has been limited to the European Social Fund and involved facilitating access to vocational training for women returners and to occupations in which women are under represented.

The *Women's Committee of the European Parliament* highlighted the special needs of women in employment by ensuring the mandatory inclusion of a standard clause in all CSF's. This clause stipulated that all actions and measures in CSF's must conform with and contribute to Community decisions on equality of opportunity, and give consideration to

training and infrastructure requirements which facilitate labour force participation by women with children.

In this connection the Report considers a number of current and relevant Community Initiatives and Programmes.:-

The *NOW* Initiative: In 1991 the Commission launched the Community Initiative of *NOW* (New Opportunities for Women). This is one of three initiatives on Human Resources "enabling the less developed regions to participate in a joint effort in the development of human resources" The *NOW* Initiative is concerned with the promotion of employment and training measures for women; it is intended to ensure that its two main measures - of enterprise creation and women's training - will not be closed to women with small children. To this end it offers financial assistance for the development of childcare facilities.

The *PETRA II* programme of the *Task Force on Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth* (3 years starting January '92) supports the vocational training of young people and their preparation for working life and is currently funding a number of initiatives in the training of women.

Rural Development Initiative: The E.C. policy of rural development is addressed by a Community Initiative aimed at rural regions and issuing from EAGGF. The specific target of the *LEADER INITIATIVE*, is the promotion of integrated and indigenous rural development in the service of the rural economy. Examination of the six main measures of *LEADER* indicates a number of ways in which women's training and childcare measures may be incorporated.

The short term aim of the above, as of all Community Initiatives, is to demonstrate and exemplify how E.C. policy may result in practical programmes. The long term aim is that these policies and practices should enter mainstream economic and social planning and implementation.

Monitoring and evaluation by the Community of its own Community Initiatives are essential for effective mainstreaming into the three main funds. Successful programmes and strategies can then be identified and documented and their experiences widely disseminated. Innovative rural programmes are of particular interest in view of changing agricultural policies and the projected programme of action projects in rural areas outlined in the third medium-term community action programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

In conclusion it should be stressed that the success of each Community Initiative will be judged on the extent to which its policy is assumed into mainstream policies. More specifically on the extent to which the financing of programmes, incorporating the policies of the Community Initiatives, are financed from the mainstream budget of the three Structural funds.

Recommendations: The report recommends :

1. that the Commission monitor and provide support and technical assistance to those *NOW* programmes with a childcare component,
2. that the childcare components of NOW be evaluated and that this evaluation include an assessment of (a) its impact on women's employment, education and training take-up, and (b) the degree to which it has been incorporated into mainstream policy and funding in the area of childcare services. In so far as they contain women's training elements, (including training in childcare) and/or provision for childcare, the initiatives of *HORIZON, EUROFORM, LEADER, and PETRA* should also be included in the evaluation,
3. that the collection and documentation of innovative childcare projects in rural areas should be undertaken. This will assist in the preparation of the Commission's programme to fund action projects in rural areas, as outlined in the Third Equal Opportunity Action Programme,

4. that the Commission should continue to provide information, advice and assistance regarding Structural Funds and childcare services in the form of (i) publications such as a written guide to the use of Structural funds for childcare services with special reference to the needs of Objective 1 countries and (ii) workshops in these countries to promote the publications and to study the use of Structural Funds for childcare. *

5. that in the period of preparation of the 1994 - 1997 Structural fund programme, which is now imminent, the Commission should highlight for member states, the importance of putting in place the economic and social infrastructural developments of women's training/education and of childcare provision: this is of particular importance in non-advantaged areas including rural regions.

* It is hoped that the present publication will form a useful source of information for groups with a programme bearing on family and work issues. See also *A Guide to Community Initiatives HUMAN RESOURCES and Guide to Childcare Measures* (available at the European Commission DGV/D/1).

A INTRODUCTION

The European Community Childcare Network is a body of childcare experts, set up in 1986 under the Second Equal Opportunity Action Programme. The initial task of the Network was to examine and report on the current childcare situation in the Community and make recommendations for future development. Major reviews of policies and services were published in 1988¹ and 1990². Four European seminars were held and their findings published³.

A Network programme of transnational visits for administrative and management personnel was arranged. This afforded the opportunity of experiencing at first hand other childcare systems and helped to disseminate examples of good practice in Europe. In addition members of the Network took responsibility for carrying out action programmes for organising publications, meetings, pilot projects and relevant public relations exercises in their own countries.

¹ *Childcare and Equality of Opportunity: Consolidated Report to the European Commission*, (V/746/88-EN) 304 pp. Brussels, 1988.

² *Childcare in the European Communities, 1985-1990, Women of Europe Supplement No. 31*. Brussels 1990.

³ (a) *Quality in Childcare Services* Report to E.C. Childcare Network Technical Seminar, Barcelona, May 1990. V/1730/90-EN Brussels 1990 Commission of the European Communities.

(b) *Men as Carers for Children*. Childcare Network Technical Seminar, Glasgow, , May 1990. V/1731/90-EN, Brussels 1990 Commission of the European Communities.

(c) *Childcare Needs of Rural Families*. Childcare Network Technical Seminar, Athens, , April 1990. V/1732/90-EN, Brussels 1990 Commission of the European Communities.

(d) *Childcare Workers with Children under 4*. Childcare Network Technical Seminar, Leiden, April, 1990. V/1732/90-EN, Brussels 1990 Commission of the European Communities.

Structural Funds and Rural Areas Group.

One of the tasks of the Network was to identify financial support within European Community funding for the encouragement and support of childcare provision and a Report on this subject was published in 1989⁴. (see also Appendices to this Report pp39,40). Another area of increasing importance was the special needs of rural and agricultural Europe for childcare services. A Working Group of five Network members was set up in 1990 to give extended consideration to these two issues. The members of the *Structural Funds and Rural Areas Group* (hereafter referred to as S.F.R.G) are: Anne McKenna (Coordinator, Ireland) Irene Belaguer (Spain), Bronwen Cohen (U.K), Vivie Papadimitriou (Greece), Eduarda Ramirez (Portugal).

The SFRG took as its main aim the identification and demonstration of how childcare facilities contribute to the objectives of the Structural Fund. Secondly it hoped to demonstrate how these same Structural Funds may be utilised in the service of developing childcare provision particularly in non-advantaged areas, including rural regions.

The SFRG worked with the Commission on the childcare measures in the NOW Initiative and collaborated in the preparation of a *Guide to Childcare Measures in NOW*, as a supplement to *A Guide to Community Initiatives HUMAN RESOURCES* (Both guides are now available from the European Commission (DGV/D/1).

As part of the work programme, visits were made to Athens, Portugal and France from December 1990 - June 1991, by members of the group. Seminars were conducted in these countries on the theme of *Structural Funds and Childcare*, (Athens December 1990) and *Childcare in Rural Areas*. (Lisbon, March 1991). In France a three day visit was arranged by courtesy of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and was organised and

⁴ Structural Funding and Childcare: Current Funding Application and Policy Applications, Brussels 1989.

conducted by Ms. Françoise Veron of that Department. A number of innovative rural childcare systems were visited in Southern France and meetings arranged where information was exchanged between Network members of SFRG and national childcare administrators, policy makers and childcare managers.

The following Report brings together the work of the Group to date. It contains some of the ideas and concepts disseminated in seminars and meetings organised by the Group in Athens, Portugal and France. Secondly it incorporates an analysis of the experience and information gained from exchange with childcare policy makers and practitioners in these Member States. The Report does not purport to be a policy statement of the Childcare Network, much less of the E.C. Equality Unit. Rather it is an attempt to bring together a number of ideas and experiences which have been found useful by others, together with the insights and experience gained from others.

Official Commission documents, in attaining the necessary high level of legal accuracy, may sometimes mystify the lay person. This is often compounded by translation to languages other than the original in which the document was written. The hope of the authors is that this Report will identify and clarify the relationship of childcare to the policy and objectives of the Community's Structural Funds as well as giving practical assistance and guidance to those groups seeking European funding for programmes relating to the reconciliation of family and work responsibilities. It should be stressed however that the developments described herein are as they are known to the author at the close of 1992. They should not be taken as a final position as Commission policy and practice is continuously evolving and changing in a dynamic way.

It is also hoped that the Report will provide support for the Third Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, 1991 - 1995. In particular we hope to provide support for the of integration of childcare measures in the Community Initiative of *NOW* into the mainstream of the three Structural Funds as well as offer a basis for the pilot action projects including projects in rural areas as proposed in the Commission's Third programme⁵.

⁵"The Third Programme provides for an extension of activities in this field: increasing the network's activities (programmes of visits and exchanges, technical seminars, more information/documentation) and launching of pilot and demonstration projects, particularly in rural areas (complementary programme to the NOW programme bearing in mind the eligibility criteria)."

B THE COMMUNITY'S STRUCTURAL FUNDS

There are three types of Structural Funds or financial mechanisms administered by the Commission for the provision of grants. Each of these has specified aims and application rules. These are :

the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to help reduce regional imbalances: this seeks to ensure a balanced economic distribution between conurbations and rural areas,

the European Social Fund (ESF) to help promote job opportunities for workers,

the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) Guidance Section, which is part of the common agricultural policy (CAP).

The Structural Funds

In 1988 the European Structural Funds were revised and strengthened in preparation for the closer market integration of 1992. The reform was political and intended to assist a frontier-free market: it was economic and intended to improve the administration of the Community's assistance to Member States, to encourage over-all growth and to reduce regional disparities. The protection of the peripheral and less favoured regions against the impact of the effects of the Single Market would serve to promote the economic and social cohesion of the entire Community. The *European Structural Funds* have been doubled in size for the period 1988 to 1993, making them 3% of the GDP of the Community; greater emphasis was placed on co-ordination within the Funds; and finally a *programme* based approach rather than a *project* based approach was to be encouraged.

Aims of the Structural Funds

The Reformed Structural Funds have targeted three types of geographical regions experiencing the greatest difficulties. These are :

regions lagging behind in general development (**Objective 1 regions**) where per capita GDP is less than 75% of the Community average,

regions in industrial decline (**Objective 2 regions**) where there is high industrial employment rate and high unemployment rate,

agricultural regions (**Objective 5 regions**), where it is intended

5a) to speed up adaptation of agricultural structures and
5b) to contribute to the development of rural areas, in areas of high agricultural employment, low agricultural income; or low levels of socio-economic development.

Two categories of person have also been targeted: these are :

the long term unemployed (**Objective 3**) for persons over 25 years unemployed for more than 12 months,

young job seekers (**Objective 4**) to help persons under 25 years enter employment.

The major objectives then of the Reformed Funds are:

- * promoting the development and structural adjustment of less developed regions
- * converting the regions seriously affected by industrial decline
- * combating long term unemployment
- * encouraging the integration of young people into employment
- * speeding up the adjustment of agricultural structures and promoting the development of rural areas.

Community Initiatives

In the main the three financial mechanisms of the E.S.F., the E.R.D.F and the E.A.G.G.F., are distributed to each member state via **Community Support Frameworks**, in English abbreviated to CSF's. CSF's are the five year developmental plans agreed between each Member State and the Community, setting out the rationale for the use of the Structural Funds.

The Community itself however withholds a part of its budget of Structural Funds to carry out its own initiatives, referred to as **Community Initiatives**. These emanate directly from Brussels and are measures of significant interest to the Community, which have not been sufficiently covered by the Member States in their respective CSF's.

The measures proposed by the Community initiatives are **additional and complimentary** to the mainstream measures agreed between the Community and the Member States in the Community Support Frameworks. The purpose of Community Initiatives then is to reinforce those aspects of Community policy which have not received sufficient attention in the CSF's of Member States.

Three Human Resource Initiatives

The **NOW** Initiative is one of a group of three initiatives on Human Resources "enabling the less developed regions to participate in a joint effort in the development of human resources". These run from 1991 for three years. The others are **EUROFORM** relating to the promotion of new occupational qualifications and new employment opportunities for both men and women and **HORIZON** relating to employment access for all disabled and otherwise disadvantaged persons.

The **NOW** Initiative is concerned with the promotion of employment and training measures for women. In order to take account of the structural difficulties that negatively affect women from entering the labour market and from entering those sectors where they are under represented, the

development of childcare is supported in ***NOW*** as complementary to the two main measures for women of (a) training and (b) business creation .

The women who are targeted in the ***NOW*** Initiative are the long term unemployed as well as women seeking to re-enter the labour market after long interruptions such as those caused by marriage, pregnancies or child rearing. In addition for Objective 1,2, and 5b regions women in insecure jobs are also eligible, as are all unemployed women, short as well as long term unemployed in regions of Objective 1.

The ***PETRA*** programmes.

PETRA is another human resource programme carried out by the *Task Force on Human Resources, Education and Training* . ***PETRA II*** continues the activities initiated under ***PETRA I*** to support the vocational training of young people and their preparation for adult and working life: it runs for a period of three years, starting from January 1992. The new enlarged ***PETRA*** incorporates the Young Workers' Exchange Programme, hitherto run as a separate activity, as well as Community support for cooperation between the vocational guidance services of Member States, thus providing a single framework for Community action in support of the vocational training of young people up to and including 27 years.

In the framework of the ***PETRA*** actions, particular attention is paid to the training of young girls and women, specifically for their integration or re-integration into the labour market. Some 10,500 young women participated in the youth training network between 1988 and 1990. In the context of the Youth Initiative Projects, which are informal training projects conceived and managed by young people themselves, ***PETRA*** has funded a number of initiatives dealing with women and including their training. The programme will continue to offer young women the possibility of Community support in areas related to work and training.

The general aim of the Community Initiatives of ***NOW***, ***EUROFORM***, ***HORIZON***, and ***PETRA*** is to *help the promotion of job opportunities* for workers by training or other work related measures.

Structural Funding and rural development

The economic and social context of rural families has altered considerably in recent years and much of this has arisen through structural changes in the Community itself. In recent years Commission policy has de-emphasised the price support aspect of the Community Agriculture Policy (CAP) resulting in a need to diversify the rural economy, "up-stream and down-stream" of agriculture. Part of the compensating mechanism to lessen the impact of these changes has been the commitment of the Commission through its Structural Funds, to help promote rural development as distinct from the development of agriculture.

Community interventions through mainstream EAGGF Guidance Funds favour actions of economic reconversion and the formation of new, diversified type activities in rural areas and it is useful to recall that 2.6 billion ecus have been allocated for this purpose⁶. In addition the Commission, to further target certain rural development policies, has presented its own Initiative of *LEADER*, issuing from EAGGF.

The *LEADER* Initiative

The *LEADER INITIATIVE* (Liaison entre action de developpement de l'Economie Rurale - Links between actions for the development of the rural economy), created in 1991 runs until the end of 1993 with 400 mecus allocated from the three funds. Its specific target is the promotion of integrated and indigenous rural development in the service of the rural economy. Its main objectives are the readjustment of activities and maintenance of a sufficiently diversified socio-economic fabric: its approach is firmly geared to local requirements and to making use of local organisational capacity and expertise.

The *LEADER* Initiative, launched at the same time as the Community Initiatives on Human Resources has set up 213 local rural development

⁶ It is possible for groups to present projects for funding under this allocation up to the end of 1993, wherever these can be integrated into existing programmes and where funds permit.

groups, throughout regions Objective 1 and Objective 5b: each of these 213 groups are managing their own finance, in line with their business plan, agreed in partnership.

The *LEADER* groups may define the re-integration of women in the rural economy and the creation of rural childcare services as a component of their strategy. However *NOW*, *EUROFORM*, *HORIZON* and *PETRA* programmes have relevance to all areas of training and employment, irrespective of whether they are rural or urban.

Rural development and regional (ERDF) funding.

Rural development is also legitimately considered under the general heading of regional development, particularly in Objective 1 regions, most of which are rural in character. In Objective 1 regions then the development of rural society is clearly a priority, as it should be an integral part of mainstream regional development and structural adjustment. This means that Initiatives from ERDF may also be used to fund rural development, and consequently are of relevance to the employment and training of women and to the provision and financing of childcare. In this regard the two ERDF Initiatives of *INTERREG* (to create cross-border cooperation and cross-border networks) and *ENVIREG* (for development of coastal areas) can be considered aspects of rural as well as of regional development.

The rural regions of the Community (comprising half of the Community's surface and a quarter of its population) have high priority in the policies which govern the application of the *Reformed Structural Funds*. This is because of their critical importance in the economic development of Europe as well as their role in conservation and leisure activities. Rural development is explicitly mentioned as part of Objective 5b regions, but most of the less developed regions, that is Objective 1 regions, are also rural in character. In Objective 1 regions the development of rural society is clearly a priority as it is also an integral part of regional development and structural adjustment⁷.

⁷ The management and selection of programmes in rural areas, considered under the aspect of regional development, are carried out at regional level (e.g. Lander in

From Community Initiatives to Member State Policy

It should be stressed that Community Initiatives are modest in scope in so far as they account for a very small percentage of the total of Structural Fund budget. They are however ambitious in their long term aim. One of their objectives is to embody Community policy in practical form, with a view to demonstrating how this may be incorporated by each member state. It is hoped that successful community initiatives will develop their own momentum and become absorbed into and adopted as member state policy. Thus will the policy and practice of the Initiatives eventually become part of mainstream Structural Fund policy and funding.

Community Initiatives serve the double purpose of demonstrating or exemplifying how Commission policy can work out in practice. They also serve the purpose of encouraging Member States to adopt these as part of their own developmental policy and plans and incorporate them into future Community Support Frameworks for mainstream funding.

It should be stressed however that if this process of mainstreaming has to succeed, further preparatory work will be required. To assist member states to a heightened awareness of the importance of mainstreaming, Community Initiative policy will need to be highlighted in all discussions and negotiations regarding the use of Structural funds. This is of some urgency considering the current discussion surrounding the development plans for the period 1994 - 1997 (see Recommendation 5 page 39).

Germany). Groups wishing to present a rural regional programme should therefore contact their regional authorities.

C THE NEED FOR CHILDCARE

with special reference to rural disadvantaged areas.

The reform of the Structural Funds coincided with the publication of the European Childcare Network's first comprehensive report *Childcare and Equality of Opportunity*, 1988. The findings of this report suggested that the recommended improvements in childcare facilities could contribute to the revised objectives of the Structural Funds. Central to the report and to consequent Network studies has been an awareness that adequate childcare is not only of considerable importance in social terms but it is also relevant to the economic well-being of the community.

Economic implications

In its first report the Network found both general inadequacy in provision of publicly funded childcare - with services throughout the community failing to meet the demand - and at the same time, considerable differences in the level of services between Member States. The Network's report also provided considerable evidence of the more direct economic impact of childcare provision. It found for example that across the Community the level of services was significantly affecting women's access to the labour market and the hours and nature of their employment. Despite increases in maternal employment participation rates, in 1988 less than half (44%) of women with a child aged 0 - 9 years were employed, compared to 92% of fathers and 71% of childless women aged 20 - 39 years. A third of all employed mothers work part-time compared with only 2% of fathers and employed mothers are twice as likely as fathers to have temporary jobs (p7, footnote 2). In addition to affecting women's access to the labour market, the inadequate level of childcare provision also serves to reinforce gender divisions in labour and thus contribute indirectly to skilled labour shortages.

The quantitative impact of this under utilisation of labour is disturbing in the context of demographic trends throughout Europe. The long-term decline in the birth rate throughout the Community has contributed to a decrease in the number of entrants to the labour force. One study of 9 out of 12 members of the European Community projects that a net surplus in entrants into the European Labour market of just under 1 million in 1981 will have become by the year 2000 a net loss of 300,000.

CHILDCARE IN RURAL DISADVANTAGED REGIONS

One of the areas of relatively greater inadequacy in childcare provision was found to be the rural regions. The *Childcare and Equality of Opportunity Report* (1988) identified a significantly lower level of such childcare provision in rural areas. It concludes that the special problems created by the rural environment for the provision of childcare facilities require study and analysis. It further urges that the childcare needs of rural parents particularly rural mothers, with their differing employment patterns are in need of urgent attention (p279).

The rural economy and human resources

The lower levels and the often inferior quality of existing provision of rural childcare serves to underline the neglect of rural women as a source of the human resource potential of rural regions. The importance of human resources in addition to capital and environmental resources has become of increasing importance in the light of evolving E.C. agricultural policy. This arises particularly at this time when a reduction of over-production in agricultural output is to be accomplished by, among other things, an increase in off-farm activity and in diversification of the rural economy. It is recognised that to implement such a policy the acquisition of new technological and service skills, entrepreneurship and non-traditional types of self-employment are to be fostered and financially assisted. In short, indigenous human resources need to be identified and developed.

The rural economy and women

Women represent, at least potentially 50% of rural human resources. However recognising and upgrading their contribution to the rural economy, poses a number of problems. Traditional household patterns of a mother working inside the home and a father working outside the home have continued longer in rural areas. The farm woman's work often includes a multiplicity of unpaid tasks such as management, book keeping, labour organisation and keeping up external contacts as well as those of housekeeping and childcare. Despite this, the woman is rarely the head of the farming business even when the men emigrate to work outside the farm. In short rural women are often regarded - and regard themselves - as unemployed and as doing subsidiary tasks around the home and farm, when in fact they may be carrying out a central coordinating role in the family's social and economic life.

It has been argued however that the very nature of the role of farmers wives and women farmers has given them deeply rooted qualities of patience, courage and perseverance. This coupled with the lack of social recognition is a strong motivating force for change. With their consequent need for social recognition they are at least as well, if not better prepared than men for training for new vocational opportunities. This was cogently expressed at an E.C. Conference on Rural Development :

“ in fact the real future of small business development in rural areas actually belongs much more to women than it does to men. I think that many men... who have been educated and trained in traditional occupations, are simply not flexible enough in their minds or in their abilities to create rural enterprises, and they are simply not likely to be good at it, in the short term, as women are. There are benefits as well as drawbacks from not having been dragged through the mill of a career in a post-industrial society, and I see no reason why women should not benefit somewhat from their lack of traditional opportunities”⁸ .

⁸ Harrison, Jeremy. Education and Training for Rural Development. In *Revitalising the Rural Economy* (Eds Cuddy.M. et al). Proceedings of European Conference on Rural Development page 51.(University College Galway 1990)

In fact studies have shown that farm women are more willing than farm men to embark on training for non-farming and less traditional types of occupations(footnote 3c). These motivational factors may be best utilised in Objective 1 regions where it has been shown that women work less frequently off-farm (p11, footnote 3). The problem to be combated in these regions is the compound one of limited farm income combined with limited opportunities for work and unattractive off-farm work. Rural women generally do not have the same range as urban women of professional, financial, technological and service occupations from which to choose. In addition, they must often overcome firmly entrenched conservative attitudes to the respective roles and responsibilities of women and men in and out of the home, attitudes which are stronger and linger longer in rural areas.

If the potential of women's contribution to the enterprise culture of rural regions is to be realised, a number of structures will first have to be put in place. These are pretraining, training and educational facilities for women and adequate and accessible childcare provision.

Social and educational aspects of childcare

Good quality childcare involves a great deal more than dropping off children for several hours whilst their parents are engaged elsewhere. There are significant educational and social gains for young children participating in a programme which has both care and educational components. The gains are now well chronicled in psychological studies and clearly demonstrate the value of quality care and early education for later intellectual, linguistic and social development and for the prevention of social pathology.

The social need for the stimulation of mixing with other children in the same age group is less likely to be met for many rural preschool children when 'next door neighbours' and potential social companions live several miles away. This problem is further aggravated by falling birth rate and smaller families. Differences in level of daycare and preschool provision between and also within Member States therefore suggest inequities in children's early learning and social experiences.

The educational role of good childcare assumes great importance in rural areas. A number of international studies have shown that rural children achieve less well than their urban coevals in scholastic attainment. That this disadvantage is in scholastic or academic achievement only is shown from other studies which demonstrate that persons reared on farms become more successful managers than urban persons with an academic qualification.

Early learning and actual life experiences do indeed shape our adult life and competencies. The provision of a programme of educational and developmental activities can enhance children's development, give them a head start in beginning primary school and assist them in reaching their full intellectual and academic potential. Only thus can the foundations for a flexible and contemporary rural workforce be established.

Maintenance of young families in rural regions.

The greatest impediment to the development of human resources in rural regions is the continuous out-migration of persons, with often the most qualified and dynamic members of the community leaving the field to the more conservative and less entrepreneurial members. The greatest loss to a rural community for both its current and future development is the migration of young parents and their children.

In rural areas fighting off the decline and ageing of the population, young families are naturally seen as the focus of attention. If such families are to be encouraged to resist out-migration, they will need grounds for perceiving their environment as an attractive place to live and rear their children rather than a hostile place from which they would want to emigrate. Whilst recognising that living in rural areas may offer parents a healthier physical and social environment for bringing up their children, this should not blind us to the fact that there are many essential infrastructural elements whose absence can tip the balance in favour of urban living. A study carried out in a

remote rural area in Greece ⁷ noted that 77% of parents thought that living in the villages was adversely affecting their children's career.

Childcare provision is an increasingly important part of this essential infrastructure. Rural parents are aware that preschool and childcare services are increasingly available in urban areas. The relative scarcity or absence of rural preschool and childcare services can be seen by them as diminishing the quality of life for their families and is rightly perceived as further evidence of rural deprivation.

A characteristic of a great many rural regions is the relative poverty due to the high proportion of concealed or almost permanent unemployment of parents as well as that of lower pay rate of rural workers. Where childcare does exist in rural areas it is likely therefore to be more expensive relative to parental income. Isolation and transport difficulties in areas of low density are found in almost all rural regions and are almost defining features. Thus increased transport costs result in rural childcare being more costly to the parent in absolute as well as relative terms. It is often also of poorer quality due to lack of access to information and to absence of vocational training facilities for childcare workers. The higher incidence of poverty and unemployment increases the child's need for the compensatory measure of daycare experience whilst intensifying the mother's need for the outside support and assistance that childcare provision can supply.

To sum up, just as it is necessary to identify rural areas under particular threat and their specific problems, so too is it necessary to identify the methods of warding off such threats by initiating actions to cope with the barriers to social and economic development. Thus we conclude that:

- * if the foundations for a flexible and contemporary rural workforce are to be established, the problem of inadequate rural childcare provision must be addressed;

⁷ Vivie Papadimitriou, *Childcare in Rural Areas: the Thessalonika Project*. Presented to Working Group Seminar in Lisbon, March 1991.

- * if EC policies for diversifying rural economy on the basis of indigenous potential are to be successful, then systematic efforts should be encouraged to make participation in non-agricultural and diversified labour markets an attractive and culturally acceptable proposition for women;**
- * if E.C. policies for stemming the flow of out-migration are to be successful it becomes necessary to identify and strengthen the role of women in the prevention of the 'social erosion' of the countryside;**
- * if European policies for rural development are to be proactive as well as reactive in response to current problems of agricultural over-production, then the full development of rural citizens and the strengthening of the rural social structure must be addressed;**
- * if the Community is to meet its own equal opportunities objectives, serious attention will have to be given to the special problems of women in rural regions.**

D. RURAL CHILDCARE MODELS

It became clear from a search of national documentation and more particularly from visits to Member States that a number of innovative programmes for childcare had been created to meet the special needs of the rural community. SFRG are aware of a number of projects currently being developed which seek to make use of the development of childcare facilities in the dual role of assisting in the diversification of skills and employment within rural disadvantaged areas whilst at the same time addressing the social and educational needs of the children. The following account of a study visit to France exemplifies this multipurpose role of childcare facilities in rural areas¹⁰. The visit was organised by Françoise Véron (*Direction de l'Espace Rural et de la Forêt, Ministère de L'Agriculture et de la Forêt*) in conjunction with ACEP, (*Association des Collectifs Enfants/Parents/Professionnels*), FNAFR, (*Fédération Nationale des Associations Familiales Rurales*), and FNFR, (*Fédération des Foyers Ruraux and l'Institut de l'Enfance et de la Famille*).

French Rural Childcare Models

As in most of Europe, childcare provision in France has been substantially lower in many rural areas than in more urbanised areas. Whilst in general France has a very high level of provision for nursery education (95% of children from the age of three years until they start school are in nursery education, generally full time), the threshold of a minimum of 12 children has meant that more remote areas have been excluded from this provision. The lack of services has diminished the quality of life for families with children in these areas: demand for services has substantially increased due to rising levels of maternal employment and demand for training in many areas.

¹⁰ It should be stressed that the examples of childcare provision described in this paper are merely illustrative of the many innovative models of rural childcare in France and indeed throughout Europe.

Associations des Collectifs Enfants/Parents/Professionnels (ACEP) ¹¹

A number of national, voluntary organisations have taken on the work of assisting and supporting rural communities to build up a system of childcare services. One of these is ACEP which originated in 1968 (the year of 'student revolutions') from a development of 'creches sauvages', parent-run creches in apartment blocks and shopping centres. ACEP in turn contributed to the enactment of the 1981 French law recognising this development. Essentially a parental movement, ACEP is promoted by a rich interdisciplinary team, comprising parents, professionals in early childhood, social workers, socio-cultural associations, municipal councils and the business world. It offers a central source of information, management, technical intervention and publications. In general 60% of the costs of parental creches are met by families and local government with 40% being met by *Caisse Allocation Familiale* or CAF ¹²

Although initially an urban based movement, it now has 188 rural childcare centres: 25 of these are in the predominantly rural area of Alpes de Haute Provence. In addition, ACEP is currently developing with the assistance of the Ministry of Agriculture, 7 pilot projects in 6 departments - Vienne, Tarn, Yonne, Alpes Haute-Provence, Vaucluse and two projects in Haute Alpes.

SFRG visited one of the two projects in the Haute Alpes area in *Vallee de l'Ubaye* called The New Family and New Environment Project (*Projet Nouvelle Famille, Nouvelle Habitat*). The valley area comprises 16 communes with around 5,000 inhabitants centred around the small urban commune of Barcelonette. The smaller communes have become progressively dependent on the urban commune, whose population has been increasing at the expense of the surrounding area. Principal areas of employment in the valley are government services, including the army and customs, tourist related services and, of decreasing importance, agriculture.

¹¹ The head office of ACEP is at 15 rue du Charolais, 75012 PARIS.

¹² CAF is a fund organised on a regional basis from employer contributions and used to pay cash benefits to parents and to subsidise services for children.

customs, tourist related services and, of decreasing importance, agriculture. A reduction in tourism coupled with the presence of the military presence of *les Chasseurs Alpains*, prompted an examination of economic trends in the areas. For these reasons the mayor of Barcelonette initiated an examination of ways in which the population and employment could be retained in the surrounding areas.

In 1991, the first year of Project New Family, the ACEP local team in conjunction with help from Paris national headquarters assembled information on the area. They initiated a consultative exercise involving elected representatives with meetings in each commune. The two-fold objective is to assist local families in developing a wide range of initiatives in services for children and of economic initiatives which will help to keep families within these areas.

One of the services visited was in Barcelonette. This exhibited the multifunctional nature of many of the French rural facilities. It offered part-time, drop-in and after-school facilities as well as full time daycare or parental creche (*creche parental/halte garderie*) with 20 children aged 0 - 3 years in the full day nursery (whole time or part time) and 14 children regularly using the drop-in facilities. This nursery also provides lunch time care and care on Wednesday afternoons for children attending Barcelonette's two state nursery schools (for children aged two and a half years until six years). The service is open 8 hours a day and the co-ordinator is a qualified childminder, with another worker and 6 trainees. Most of the mothers are involved in service industries, which are often seasonal and thus requiring seasonal childcare. The combination of daycare with part-time care provides flexibility for the variety and changing nature of mothers' needs.

***Federation National des Association Familiales Rurales (FNAFR)
Fédération Départemental des Associations Familiales
Rurales(FDAFR)*** ¹³

FNAFR has been involved for over 40 years in assisting rural families and in the last 15 years it has developed a particular emphasis on services for young children. It is organised on a regional and local basis and at present there are 3,300 organisations within 77 departments. At a national level the emphasis has been on local development, flexibility and multifunctionalism. FNAFR works through elected representatives and within local structures including the socio-cultural centres established throughout France. A strong emphasis on parental involvement has developed over the last ten years. In the region of Gard, FDAFR assists local groups in developing services which require parental involvement. Parents however are not used directly in caring for children but rather in management and administration and in assisting in other ways, such as helping out with laundry: there is however no requirement for parents to undertake these duties. The region has 25 parent-run day nurseries providing full-time and part-time care facilities. The first opened in 1985 and three opened in September 1991. Services for children under three years of age are financed by CAF and by the municipality and parents.

An FDAFR facility was visited in Bernis, a dormitory village of 1,700 inhabitants with many mothers working in the nearby town of Nimes. The building was originally a nursery school which has now re-located. Like Barcelonette it is both a full-time and part-time facility, average use of the part-time service being two hours. It has six full-time places for infants of 3 months to 3 years, and 10 part-time places for children 3 months to six years. Again, as in Barcelonette, school-age childcare is provided for local children attending state nursery schools, one of these being a handicapped child. Qualified staff comprise a coordinator, originally trained as a midwife, one other trained worker and four students in training.

¹³ FNAFR, 81 Avenue Raymond Poincare, PARIS 16.

Another FDAFR facility was visited in Aubais, a village of around 1,500 inhabitants in an agricultural area, with a local 'Perrier' water factory and with a considerable amount of commuting to employment in Nimes. The facility had started in vacated premises which had been built for another purpose. In this instance however it was in the process of being re-located to a nearby converted building adjacent to the local nursery school and surrounded by open space and gardens. This facility has six places in the day nursery and ten in part-time care and there are two fully qualified staff. The service has been considerably assisted by the municipality and forms part of a wider scheme of educational and cultural activities developed in partnership with the municipality. The mayor who describes it as a service to offer a 'choice for children' pursues a policy of 'encouraging parents to ask for what they need'. Trainees at the Centre also operate a baby sitting services for parents in their own homes.

Many of the rural programmes in France start from the basis that since conditions are quite different to those in urban areas, so too the model of urban childcare is unsuitable. In the evolving French rural model, a number of features were noted:

1. Multifunctional nature

The development of a multifunctional or multipurpose model which is seen as a useful solution in areas of low density population. In such a multifunctional model a single premise may accommodate part-time and full-time daycare, drop-in services and after school care. In one of the rural centres there is an English language classroom for children from four years of age. In addition the same premises may serve the vocational and personal development needs of mothers as well as the needs of their children.

2 Parental management.

In each of the 188 rural creches established by ACEP, the initiative has been taken by local parents and the centres continue to be managed by parent committees. However in all cases qualified workers are employed to work

with the children. In one area an anthropologist was monitoring the effects of the nursery on the surrounding rural culture. This insistence on professionals working side by side with parents ensures quality services for the children as well as acceptance, status and recognition for the enterprise and ensures eligibility for public funding from various sources.

3. Rural development.

The personal and vocational development of women is seen as a part of rural development and childcare is seen as an integral part of both. The conception is not that of beginning the process of rural development with an addition of childcare to support this. Rather it is of installing a local system of childcare as part of the initial social dynamism for revitalising the rural economy. In one mountainous region the centre provided a valued childcare facility serving local tourism, with numbers in the nursery doubling in the summer months. In other communities it could be seen that the use of under-used premises, such as small rural schools, ensured that these threatened services remained intact. In this way a vital social, economic and cultural infrastructure was saved for the community.

E. THE STRUCTURAL FUNDS AND CHILDCARE

The contribution of childcare facilities to the objectives of the Structural Fund had received some limited recognition within previous Structural funding programmes. In general this had been limited to the European Social Fund and involved facilitating access to vocational training for women returners and to occupations in which women are under represented. Although information on this funding is not always easily retrievable centrally, one of the earlier projects appears to have been in the United Kingdom, involving the establishment of a nursery at the South Glamorgan Women's Workshop. The nursery, set up to facilitate access to women in areas of new technology, received 50% of its running costs for six years from the ESF. The South Glamorgan programme is a good example of an integrated funding approach as the conversion of the nursery premises together with the training premises, also received funds (50% of grant) from the ERDF non-quota steel restructuring programme in 1983.

Reference has already been made to the findings of the Childcare Network's report stating that improvements in childcare facilities could make a substantial contribution to the revised objectives of the Structural Fund, both in economic and social terms. A detailed analysis of this contribution outlining the applications identified by the Network for relating childcare to Structural funds and applications of Structural funds to childcare is given in Appendices to this document (pp 40,41).

At the suggestion of the *Women's Rights Committee of the European Parliament* the possibility of applications for childcare in the three Structural Funds was signalled by a standard clause to be included in all Community Support Frameworks, thus:

" The actions and measures undertaken in the framework of this Community support framework must conform with, and where appropriate contribute to, the implementation of Community policy and legislation relating to Equality of opportunity between men and women. In particular, consideration must be given to training and infrastructure requirements which facilitate labour force participation by women with children."

The EC's *Equal Opportunities Advisory Committee* through the Commission's Equality Unit (DGV(4b)) pressed for a recognition of the relevance of the Structural Funds for facilitating women's access to training and for childcare development. Subsequently the Commission brought forward the Community Initiative of *NOW* .¹⁴

THE NOW INITIATIVE (New Opportunities for Women)

As has been stated the *NOW* Initiative is one of three Community Initiatives - the others being *EUROFORM* and *HORIZON* - enabling the less developed regions to participate in a joint effort to develop human resources. (cf *Three Human Resource Initiatives*, Section B) The *NOW* Initiative recognises that women contribute a potential source of human resources whilst at the same time facing structural difficulties in entering and participating in certain sectors of the labour market. It is thus concerned with the promotion of employment and training measures for women.

The development of childcare is supported in *NOW* as a complement to the two main measures for women of (a) training and (b) business creation. This is an acknowledgment that inadequate childcare provision, particularly in

¹⁴ As already outlined in Section B, the Community itself may introduce measures or initiatives which are addressed to issues which it sees as important and which have not been sufficiently addressed in the CSFs of the Member States. The *NOW* Initiative, directed to women in the labour market is such a measure.

Objective 1 countries, such as Greece, Portugal, Ireland and Spain is one of the principal causes for women's disadvantaged position in the labour market. Any improvement in childcare provision can be expected to bring about an improvement in women's position in the labour market. In other words the **NOW** Initiative is intended to ensure that the two main measures of training and business creation will not be closed to women with small children because of their childcare duties. The **NOW** Initiative therefore offers financial assistance for the following complementary measures on **Development of Childcare Facilities:**

- (i) the provision of childcare facilities, especially in zones of industrial concentration, for the benefit of enterprises, of groups of enterprises or vocational training centres (for Objective 1 regions only). Financial support is from the E.R.D.F. and is for building and equipping costs of day nurseries,
- (ii) operating costs of childcare centres related to vocational training centres (for all Member States). Funding is from the E.S.F. and is intended to cover any necessary childcare costs incurred by a woman taking part in a NOW scheme.
- (iii) vocational training for childcare workers to raise their skills and consequently, the quality of the services (E.S.F. funding applying to all Member States). It is based on the conviction that the quality of the personnel working in childcare is the key to the quality of these services.

One example of an integrated project for Objective 1 regions, incorporating all three childcare measures, might be the construction of a nursery in an industrial complex or industrial park, which also contains a training establishment providing **NOW** courses for women. These training courses could be for a variety of skills such as marketing and export training, craft training or computer skills training. In addition there might be an in-service training course arranged for the nursery workers. The nursery would serve the needs of the children of trainees, as well as the children of women working in the industrial complex.

General training in *NOW*.

There are other possibilities for childcare within *NOW* other than those contained in the childcare complementary measure. For example the setting up of a nursery may itself be regarded as an example of a small business or cooperative and thus eligible for funding. Similarly vocational training measures for childcare, including vocational preparation and employment assistance, qualifies for financial aid, under the general training category of *NOW*.

Post-script to *NOW*

The *NOW* Initiative has been taken up by all twelve Member States. The amount and extent of proposals put forward have been limited by the relative percentage allocation of funds to each member state, based on Structural Fund designation (only Objective 1 regions, i.e. relatively undeveloped countries or regions could apply for funding for building and equipping of childcare premises). However the principal objective of childcare measures in *NOW*, as in other measures, is the promotion of the transfer of experience and know-how from more developed regions to those less developed. Thus Denmark, for example, which has one of the most developed and comprehensive childcare infrastructures in the Community (together with a relatively modest allocation of *NOW* funds) is cooperating and sharing expertise with four other member states.

A criteria for selection of *NOW* projects was the inclusion of childcare measures with either of the two main vocational measures. The Community Initiative of *NOW* has thus been an opportunity for emphasising the importance of childcare measures for the training and employment of women.

Monitoring and evaluation of *NOW*

Given that the bulk of programmes and funding will take place in Objective 1 regions, it would be essential for such regions, under-supplied and less developed as they are, to receive monitoring and support throughout the life span of the Initiative.

In addition to monitoring and support measures, an **evaluation of *NOW*** would be an essential feed back mechanism. The results of such evaluation will be a requisite for the Mid-term and Final evaluative reports of the Third Action programme. Such an evaluation will alert the Community as to how the Initiative has attained its objectives. More importantly it will elucidate how far the programmes initiated under ***NOW***, have become part of the Member State's general policy, i.e. how far they have entered mainstream policy and practice. No realistic future policy planning can be envisaged without such an evaluation.

Training for women in *EUROFORM* and *HORIZON*.

Although ***NOW*** is aimed at the employment and vocational training of women, it should not be assumed that vocational and employment measures of ***EUROFORM*** and ***HORIZON*** are exclusively for men. These initiatives may also be regarded as a financial source for the promotion of training for long term or unemployed women as well as men. In addition any necessary childcare cost incurred by women in a ***EUROFORM*** or ***HORIZON*** may be considered eligible for funding under the general rules of the European Social Fund.

Other vocational training initiatives

EUROFORM, ***HORIZON*** and ***NOW*** originate from the offices of the ESF one of whose aims is to help promote job opportunities for workers. There are however other ESF programmes relating to vocational training. These

are as much or even more relevant to women, whose vocational training needs are as great if not greater than those of men. One of these is the *PETRA II* programme relating to training of young people up to 27 years of age.

In addition to evaluation of the *NOW* Initiative, an evaluation of the other two Community Initiatives *EUROFORM* and *HORIZON* and the extent to which have they affected women's employment and childcare provision would provide valuable information for future planning.

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The E.C. policy of rural development is addressed by, among other things, the *LEADER* Initiative which issues from The European Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF)., with the participation of the other funds.

THE *LEADER* INITIATIVE

The specific target of the *LEADER INITIATIVE* is the promotion of integrated and indigenous rural development in the service of the rural economy. The total budget is 400 million ecus and co-financing required from Member States is 50% maximum for 5b regions and 25% for Objective 1 regions.

The objectives of *LEADER* are described as

"Readjustment of activities and maintenance of a sufficiently diversified socio-economic fabric (which) call for an approach firmly geared to local requirement and (of) local origin and making use of available organisational capacity and expertise" (3. 91/c/14).

LEADER and rural women

As has been argued above a "diversified socio-economic fabric" must take account of the key role of women in the existing fabric and also recognise their potential as rich sources of "available organisational capacity and

expertise". It is only by interpreting the possibilities of these rural Initiatives in innovative and creative ways that full use of all such available organisational capacity and expertise can be made.

An examination of the *LEADER* Initiative with this in mind suggests the following ways in which women's training and childcare measures might in the future be incorporated in the programme dealing with rural development.

(a) Technical support to rural development

In the general identification of local initiatives, childcare facilities should be included. Feasibility studies of childcare needs and difficulties of parents are subsumed in such activities.

(b) Vocational training

As previously stated studies have indicated farm women are generally more ready than farm men to embark on training for non-farming and less traditional type occupations. It is also known that assistance with childcare is the first requirement of young women before contemplating training measures. Provision of childcare facilities, either by childminders at home or in a centre, is likely to prove a fruitful utilisation of human resources as well the creation of a new rural dynamic.

(c) Rural tourism

The provision of childcare facilities on a seasonal basis has been recognised as an important inducement to, and back-up service for, rural tourism in E.C. countries with developed tourist industries. As well as caring for the children of women employed in agri-tourism, they may also offer a direct service by providing a drop-in childcare service for tourists' children. For example attendance at some village creches in parts of Southern France doubles in this way during the summer vacation months.

(d) Small firms, craft enterprises and local services

Many domestic and peri-agricultural activities already carried out by women - such as knitting, lace making, free range poultry keeping and organic vegetable growing - are capable of being transformed and sustained by training modules in business and marketing skills.

In addition, the growth of childcare as a recognised and qualified service may be regarded as a new rural growth area. ACEP in France have created 2,000 stable jobs in childcare in the last ten years, with most of these occurring in the last five years. It is true that childcare arrangements already exist in some rural areas, but these are often in the informal economy. The introduction of a well managed service offers the possibility of official employment at a variety of skill levels e.g. child-minder (in minder's own home) untrained assistant, nursery assistant, nursery nurse, preschool teacher, nursery manager and district co-ordinator.

Post-script to *LEADER*

213 projects have now been funded under *LEADER* . Many of the most innovative of these projects have a dynamic collaboration of local community workers with an integrated approach at local level. Diversification of local economies will be fostered by the co-financing of a range of investments in rural development operations such as tourism, crafts and marketing of agricultural produce. A central information unit has been set up to facilitate, organise and publicise the exchange of information and experience between the 213 groups and in addition to create models upon which other Community groups might base their projects.

In the building up of this rural communication and information network of projects, it is recognised that the main focus will be on rural development and the diversification of farmers' incomes and creation of alternative off-farm activities. Sharing of information and experience on women's employment and training measures will be part of the exchange of the experience organised by the network.

The re-integration of women in the rural economy and the creation of childcare services may be a component strategy proposed by the *LEADER* group.. However there are a number of others, not specifically earmarked as rural which can be looked at in this light. Thus the aforementioned *NOW*, *EUROFORM*, *HORIZON* and *PETRA* programmes have relevance to all areas of training and employment, irrespective of whether they are rural or urban. Since the groups with worst access to the labour market will become priority groups, this must include women, and *a fortiori* rural women.

Long-term importance of Community Initiatives

The aim of all Community Initiatives, irrespective of their content is to demonstrate a model or pilot programme for Member States in important policy areas. In the short term the intention of Community Initiatives generally is to show how E.C. policy may issue in practical programmes. The long term aim is that these policies and practices should enter mainstream economic and social planning. More specifically they should become integrated into individual Community Support Frameworks which account for the greatest proportion of E.C. Structural Funds. (Current CSF's have been running since 1989 and will come to an end in 1993.)

The funding of the Initiatives reflects this reality. Community Initiatives have a short life span, usually two three or four years and are relatively few in number (although sometimes bewildering in their acronym form). Whilst recognising the example of the 'know how' which they demonstrate and welcoming the innovative and ingenious methods of the Initiatives it must be noted that their funding is marginal to the general Structural funding of the ESF, ERDF, EAGGF.

It should however be emphasised once more that the *raison d'etre* of the Community Initiatives is that they become part of mainstream policy and funding. Childcare provision for women in education, training and employment is an integral element of the equality programme of the Commission, of the Community Social Action programme and of the Third Term Action Programme. The ultimate aim is that childcare provision will be available not only as part of a Community Initiative, or of pilot and

demonstration programmes, but as an integral element of the social infrastructure which enables women to enter the labour force on a more approximately equal footing to men. It is an integral part of Community policy of reconciling family and work responsibilities in a single European market

With reference to current C.S.F. funding it is important to note that the developmental plans therein are considered as the basis for action and that they are subject to annual review in the light of new information, strategies and interim results. This means in effect that the details and operational structures remain to be worked out throughout each five year phase (in this instance in the years remaining to 1993), and secondly that they may be altered at any time to take account of feedback from results and changing information and attitudes. The argument of this paper is that a new understanding of the role of women and of their family and work responsibilities is part of this new information and changing social attitudes.

This is of importance in this year and in 1992. It is of critical importance if we are to learn from the lessons of the past and to have a well thought out policy for the new round of mainstream Community Support Frameworks commencing in 1993, which will set the scene for Europe up to the third millenium.

F. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Report sets out the work undertaken by the Structural Funds and Rural Areas Group (SFRG) set up in December 1990 by the E.C. Childcare Network. The main purpose of SFRG was to identify the contribution of childcare services to the objectives of the Structural Fund; and it was hoped to show how the Structural Funds in turn may be utilised in the service of developing childcare provision, particularly in non-advantaged areas including rural regions.

1. Monitoring of childcare components in *NOW*

The most concrete embodiment of the social and economic importance of childcare is seen in the Community Initiative *NOW*. Experience to date at national level would indicate that there has been an encouragingly large response to this Initiative. It would appear that a substantial amount of individual proposals are concerned with childcare development measures and include childcare measures as elements of the proposal.

Most *NOW* Initiative programmes with a childcare component will take place in Objective 1 regions which are by definition already disadvantaged in many areas of social as well as economic infrastructure. The transnational aspects of *NOW* were designed to provide support and some degree of external moderating or quality-control for *NOW* programmes. Such transnational mutual support, welcome though it may be, is a new and untried exercise. Experience to date of putting it in place for the *NOW* Initiative has identified some of the inherent complexities and difficulties.

Recommendation 1: That the Commission monitor and provide support and technical assistance to those *NOW* programmes with a childcare component during the course of their three years duration.

2. Evaluation of *NOW* and other Community Initiatives.

Putting *NOW* into operation has been a costly and complex task for administrators of the Structural Funds both at European and national level. If any lessons are to be learned from this exercise, it should be evaluated and its potential for replicability assessed.

Since there may be elements concerned with childcare provision in the other two human resource initiatives of *HORIZON* and *EUROFORM*, as well as in other current community initiatives - such as *LEADER* and *PETRA II* (e.g. training in childcare workers) - an evaluation of the *NOW* childcare programme might also incorporate an evaluation of these.

This Report has pointed to the function of Community initiatives as a means to the use of the body of Structural Funds i.e. the E.S.F., the E.R.D.F., and the E.A.G.G.F. Such an evaluation of Community initiatives will yield information on the "mainstreamability" of *NOW* and other Community initiative programmes with a childcare component, and assess the degree to which they have been incorporated into general policy, practice and funding applications. It will also shed light on the effect of such childcare provision on women's take-up of employment, education and training measures. Such data, based as it will be on direct experience of programmes over a number of years will contribute to development strategies for mainstreaming support for childcare services into ESF, ERDF and EAGGF funding.

Recommendation 2 : That the childcare components of *NOW* be evaluated and that this evaluation include an assessment of (a) its impact on women's employment, education and training take-up, and (b) the degree to which it has been incorporated into mainstream policy and funding in the area of childcare services. In so far as they may contain provision for women's training and for childcare provision, the initiatives of *HORIZON*, *EUROFORM*, *LEADER*, and *PETRA II* should be included in the evaluation.

3. Childcare in rural regions

It became clear from a search of national documentation and more particularly from visits to Member States that in response to the need and demand for increased childcare provision, a number of innovative programmes for rural childcare had already been set up. In some instances these were on a pilot basis or experimental basis. They were often accompanied by careful monitoring and thus had potential for replicability. Many of these programmes start from the premise that since conditions are quite different to those in urban areas, so too the model of urban childcare is unsuitable. This results in innovative models such as childcare services run by a combination of parents and professions as well as multipurpose services and centres meeting the needs of mothers and of children.

In some instances these programmes, in addition to providing care for young children of rural mothers, were seen to be acting as a dynamic element in the process of rural development. As well as becoming a focus of activity and regeneration of social contacts and networks, childcare centre might halt the dismantling of community educational structures, by providing alternative or additional uses for threatened primary or other schools or institutions. Thus their provision is seen by a number of national planners and regional administrators in France, for example, as an element in rural and regional development and as an integral part of their developmental strategy for these regions.

It would be desirable and instructive if the Community could identify and record such projects to provide models for all regions and in particular for the less developed regions. The work of the SFWG has served to identify the parameters of childcare in rural areas as well as indicating possible directions for future development.

Recommendation 3: The collection and documentation of innovative projects in rural areas should be undertaken. This will assist in the preparation of the Commission's programme to fund action projects in rural areas, as outlined in the Third Equal Opportunity Action Programme,

4. Need for information at member state level

In the course of their visits, members of the SFRG became aware of the need and demand for information, advice and criteria regarding Structural Funds and childcare services. The need and demand for "How to" publications was evident, as well as the opportunity to study and take stock of progress at Member State level. SFRG consider that its work on the Structural Funds should include further study visits.

The task of promoting the reconciliation of family and work responsibilities in the Community's social, rural and regional policies is well worth continuing and extending as is the need to bring practical assistance and guidance to those groups seeking European funding for programmes relating to reconciliation issues. By such strategies as seminars, discussions and transnational visits, the spirit of European legal instruments as well as the letter, will become more accessible and available to the agencies and groups for whom they are intended.

Recommendation 4. The Commission should provide information, advice and assistance regarding Structural Funds and childcare services in the form of (i) publications such as a written guide to the use of Structural funds for childcare services with special reference to the needs of Objective 1 countries and (ii) workshops in these countries to promote the publications and to study the use of Structural Funds for childcare.

5. Childcare - a mainstream issue

A particular aim of this Report is to identify how childcare provision contributes to the objectives of the Structural Funds in both their economic and social aspects. Another aim is to examine how the Structural funds may be used in the service of developing childcare provision, particularly in non-

advantaged areas, including rural regions. To this end the Report highlights the policy of the Community Initiatives relating to family and work issues, whilst constantly drawing attention to the necessity of bringing these issues into mainstream funding as a matter of priority. The report by demonstrating the interdependence of economic and social issues as well as issues of rural reconversion, points to the necessity of addressing all three Funds in the process of mainstreaming childcare and family/ work issues.

As well as being a priority issue this is also an issue requiring urgent consideration since developmental plans and Community Support Frameworks are currently under preparation.

Recommendation 5: that in the period of preparation of the 1994 - 1997 Structural fund programme, which is now imminent, the Commission should highlight for member states, the importance of putting in place the economic and social infrastructural developments of women's training/education and of childcare provision: this is of particular importance in non-advantaged areas including rural regions.

APPENDIX 1.

Development of childcare facilities in relation to 'mainstream' Structural Funds' Objectives.

Objective	Structural Fund	Relevance of Childcare facilities
Objective 1. Promoting development and structural adjustment of less developed regions.	ERDF, ESF, EAGGF (Guidance section)	Enhance infrastructure promoting population, retention and economic development. Create employment Enhance skills of labour force thro' facilitating training, economic development. and diversification of economy. Enhance education and employment potential of future work force.
Objective 2. Converting regions seriously affected by industrial decline	ERDF, ESF	As above
Objective 3. Encouraging return to employment of long term unemployed.	ESF	Create jobs Enhance skills of current and future labour force
Objective 4. Encouraging integration of young people into employment.	ESF	Create jobs, Enhance skills of young people, in particular teenage mothers. Enhance education and employment potential of future workforce.
Objective 5a - 5b Speeding up adjustment of agricultural structures and promoting development of rural areas..	EAGGF ESF ERDF	Enhance infrastructure promoting population retention and economic development. Create employment Enhance, diversify skills of current labour force through facilitating training Facilitate economic development, diversification Enhance education and employment potential of future workforce.

APPENDIX 2.

Possible Applications for using Structural funds in relation to childcare

- * **Objective 1** Development of nurseries and out-of school schemes where these can be demonstrated to contribute to increasing the economic potential, development and structural adjustment of areas or as health and education facilities .
- * **Objective 2.** In addition to ESF expenditure, funding to support the construction of an industrial site or business centre which incorporates the physical infrastructure for childcare facilities and services and Small and Medium Sized enterprises.
- * **Objectives 3 and 4.** Development of operations combining several types of intervention in order that training should be a real factor in promoting occupational and social integration: innovatory projects and accompanying measures to support those providing access for training: other possibilities in relation to maximising local employment development potential and measures for young people.
- * **Objective 5B.** The funding of childcare including establishment of nurseries and provision of running costs for at least two years where relevant to rural development and diversification of the rural economy.