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# **FAMILY DAY CARE IN EUROPE**

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

**This document has been prepared for use within  
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**European Commission Network on Childcare and Other Measures to  
Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities**

**FAMILY DAY CARE  
IN EUROPE**

Prepared for the Network by Malene Karlsson

**European Commission  
Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs  
DGV/A/3 - Equal Opportunities Unit**

# FAMILY DAY CARE IN EUROPE

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The contents of this report reflect the opinion of the author. It does not necessarily represent the European Commission's official position.

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## FOREWARD

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Previous reports from the Network have clearly demonstrated the important role played by family day care in most Member States in providing care for children while their parents are employed or in training. For example, in France over 200,000 *assistantes maternelles* provide services for more than 400,000 children; in the UK over 110,000 *childminders* provide places for more than 250,000 children; while in Denmark, over 70,000 children are cared for by over 20,000 *dagplejer*. Moreover, such figures only include family day carers who have been approved by public authorities or, in the case of Denmark, who are employed by local authorities. In most countries, there are further large numbers who are unknown to public authorities and remain invisible, at least in national statistics.

A report on family day care in Europe, therefore, would be justified purely on the grounds of the important role played by this type of service in the lives of so many children and parents and for their essential contribution to the reconciliation of employment and family responsibilities. There are, however, other reasons why the Network has commissioned this report.

The Network's previous work has paid far more attention to centre-based services (nurseries, kindergartens, nursery schools, age-integrated centres etc.) than family day care. Even more important, family day care is an important subject for a Network that has been established by the European Commission's Equal Opportunities Unit, as part of the European Union's Equal Opportunities Programme. Family day care provides employment for a large number of women, certainly over half a million in the Union - and with rare exceptions family day carers are women. Too often, as this report shows, family day carers have poor pay and conditions of work, and limited training and career opportunities. Too often, they exemplify the disadvantaged position of women in the labour market and the low value given to working with young children. The report raises important issues concerning the training, conditions and status of family day carers and how their position in the labour force can be improved to reflect the importance of their work.

This report should be read in the context of emerging European Union policy on childcare

services, which include family day care. The Council Recommendation on Child Care<sup>1</sup>, adopted by all Member States in March 1992, sets down a number of principles for these services including: affordability; combining care and a pedagogical approach; accessibility to children with special needs; and training for workers, both basic and continuous, that is '*appropriate to the importance and the social and educative value of their work*'.

The Network would like to thank all the individuals and organisations in different countries who assisted with the preparation of the report and, in particular, the author of the report, Malene Karlsson. Malene is a Danish-born expert on family day care who currently lives in Sweden. She has undertaken a wide variety of work on family day care in Denmark and Sweden, and also has extensive knowledge of family day care systems in many other countries, partly through her work for the *International Family Day Care Organisation (IFDCO)*. The report benefits greatly from her experience, knowledge and wide connections in the field of family day care.

Peter Moss

Coordinator, EC Network on Childcare and Other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities

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<sup>1</sup>The official reference for the Council Recommendation is 92/241/EEC, and the text was published in the Official Journal L 123, 8.5.1992. The text can also be found in the Network's *1992 Annual Report*, available free of charge from the European Commission (DGV/A/3), 200 rue de la loi, B-1049 Brussels.

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## INTRODUCTION

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### Defining Family Day Care

Many children receive non-parental care while their parents work or study. Centre-based services (for example, nurseries) are important, but individual carers are also widely used especially for children under 3 years of age. Between 3 and 4, most children start school (usually nursery school, but in a few countries 4 year olds are admitted to primary school before compulsory school age) or kindergarten; but individual carers are still important because they may often provide for children at times when they are not at school or kindergarten. Where children do not go to school or kindergarten, individual carers may provide the main form of care while parents are at work until children reach compulsory school age.

Individual care arrangements can take many forms:

- \* Relatives, especially grandparents;
- \* Neighbours or friends (ie. carers already known to a family);
- \* Carers who care for the child in her or his own home (e.g. nannies, babysitters, au pairs, mother's helps etc);
- \* Carers providing for children in the carer's home (family day carers).

The focus of this report is on the last of these four arrangements - family day care. For the purposes of this report I have defined a family day carer as *a person who cares for other people's children in her own home, for payment*. However it should always be borne in mind that family day care, so defined, is only one sector of 'individual' care and that some of the issues raised in this report about family day care apply to some or all of the other types of individual care. Indeed, in some countries, the concept of family day care is extended to include situations where 2 or more carers work together or where the individual carer comes into the child's own home. For example, in Finland family day care can apply to the arrangement where 2 or 3 people care for up to twelve children in rented but 'home like premises'; while in Denmark and Sweden, as well as Finland, family day care can also cover a carer providing for several children from different families in the home of one of the children.

The report also focuses on the 12 Member States of the European Union (in 1994), as well

as Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Family day carers exist in all of these countries. There are however major national variations in the extent of family day care (it is, for example, uncommon in Greece, Italy and Spain), as well as in its organisation and the level of public involvement.

### Terminology

The terms used for a family day carer vary a good deal from country to country, while some countries have no term in their language. Many countries have an official term for family day carers as well as one that is in common usage (Table 1). In Belgium (Flemish Community), Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway and Sweden the term '*day mother*' is the unofficially used term. By contrast the official terms in these countries indicate a wish to give a more professional status to family day care and to emphasise that the carer is not a substitute for the mother. Similarly in France, the term *assistante maternelle* indicates assistance to the mother, rather than taking over her role, while the Dutch term *gastouder* or '*guest parent*' also emphasises that the family day carer is not a mother substitute.

Using another word than '*day mother*' in official terminology - for example, the German *tagespflegeperson* or the French *assistant ou assistante maternelle* - avoids assuming that the work of family day care is inherently to be done by women, although common usage of '*day mother*' reflects the reality that in practice family day care is done almost entirely by women.

Getting a correct official term may be important for the public perception of family day care, but in many countries the official term is often so long and complex that it is unlikely to enter common usage. A notable exception is the Portuguese term. *Ama* is not only short but is closely connected with '*amore*', to love; it gives warm associations, without using the word '*mother*'.

The English word still used most widely in the UK, both officially and in common usage, is *childminder*, which implies a very narrow concept of guarding children or keeping them safe (the word '*minder*' is commonly used to refer to a bodyguard, as well as to a family day carer). An alternative term, increasingly used in English-speaking countries, is '*family day care*'. This term has been used throughout this report, with *family day carer* abbreviated to '*fdc*'.

### Who are Family Day Carers?

Although family day care is organised in many different ways, the basic work of the fdc is the same, no matter where it is undertaken. Not all countries have research showing who becomes a fdc, but those that do show much the same picture.



Almost all fdcs are women, and they are mostly married or cohabiting. Fdcs come from all kinds of backgrounds and have worked previously in all kinds of occupations, although women with higher levels of education, such as university graduates, are under-represented (this group is also most likely to be employed outside the home when they have children).

Almost all fdcs have dependent children of their own; the main reason for taking up the work for the typical fdc is the wish to earn some money without having to leave her own children in someone else's care. Mostly they have only one or two children; not only is this true of most mothers in Europe today, but regulations in most countries that limit the number of children per fdc restrict opportunities for women with larger families. On average, fdcs are somewhat older than the mothers of the children they care for.

It seems to be the case generally that family day care is rather less common in cities. This may be due to several factors, including wider employment opportunities, less suitable housing and the wider availability of other types of service.

The number of children cared for on average by fdcs varies between countries, depending on the regulations in force. The ages of children also vary, depending on the length of each country's maternal and parental leave arrangements (which determines when parents resume employment), the availability and hours of opening of nursery schooling or kindergarten and the age at which compulsory schooling begins. As already noted, fdcs are most likely to care for young children, up to the age of 3 or 4 years, but older children are commonly found in family day care in many countries.

The employment status of fdcs vary a good deal from country to country, in particular along two main parameters: whether they are self-employed or employees; and whether they are independent or have a relationship with an agency, whether a public authority or private organisation. Where fdcs work as part of a group which is linked to an agency, this is referred to below as an '*organised family day care scheme*'. The possible variations in employment status are discussed in more detail in the Overview section of this report.

One other important source of variation is the legal status of fdcs. In most countries, the law requires fdcs to be publicly approved and registered, usually by public authorities. Where this is the case, a proportion of self-employed fdcs operate without this public recognition, in effect illegally. The proportion of 'illegal' fdcs varies between countries, from a minority to a majority, but the extent of this variation and the number of fdcs in this group cannot be precisely quantified because they are 'invisible' in official statistics.

**Table 1: Terms used for family day care in different countries**

	Official term	Literal translation	Term in common use
Austria	Tagesmutter	Day Mother	Tagesmutter
Belgium [Flemish]	Opvanggezin	Receiving Family	Onthaalmoeder
[French]	Gardienne encadrée	Supervised Minder	Gardienne
	Gardienne indépendante	Independent Minder	
Denmark	Dagplejer	Day Carer	Dagplejemor
Finland [Finnish]	Perhepäivähoitaja	Family Day Carer	Perhepäivähoitaja
[Swedish]	Familjedagvårdare	Family Day Carer	Familjedagvårdare
France	Assistante maternelle	Mother's Assistant	Nourrice
Germany	Tagespflegeperson	Day Care Person	Tagesmutter
Greece	--No term--		--No term--
Italy	--No term--		--No term--
Ireland	--No term--		Childminder
Luxembourg [French]	Gardienne	Minder	Gardienne
[German]	Tagesmutter	Day Mother	Tagesmutter
Netherlands	Gastouder	Guest Parent	Gastouder
Norway	Familjebarnehageassistent	Family Kindergarten Assistant	Dagamma
Portugal	Ama	(of love)	Ama
Spain	--No term--		--No term--
Sweden	Dagbarnvårdare	Daychild Carer	Dagamma
UK	Childminder		Childminder

## **The Preparation and Structure of the Report**

Writing a report on 16 European countries requires gathering a lot of information. As many aspects of family day care differ so much from country to country it soon became evident that no formal questionnaire would be useful. Moreover, my aim was to ask all the '*whys*' and '*hows*' and to try and find out what is behind all the '*of courses*' and '*naturallys*'. All of us take much of what we do and many of the features of our own societies for granted; it can be difficult to answer questions about what seems obvious and natural. In several cases it turned out that what seemed so self-evident to someone working in a country that they did not think of mentioning it, was most interesting and important information. This also implies that there might still be relevant information not included in this report, simply because no-one has thought of giving it or asking for it!

Instead of using a questionnaire, therefore, I have worked through 'key persons' in each country, asking for reports, statistics and other kinds of information. Having read this information, issues have been followed up and more questions have been asked, together with personal visits to half of the countries involved. An important network for this project has been the IFDCO. Through this organisation, and the international conferences it has held (most recently in Sweden in 1993), I established contacts with most European countries.

Members of the IFDCO have generously supplied information and helped me to contact other key persons in their countries. I want to thank all these people who so generously have given of their time and knowledge to help me. Without their help this report would never have been possible to produce.

The report starts with an overview of the situation in Europe, summarizing the information from all 16 countries, in order to give the reader a sense of the main features of family day care. Following this, a national summary has been prepared for each country. Each summary includes short sections on: national context; the contribution of family day care in the overall provision of services for young children; public involvement in family day care including both subsidising costs and regulations; organisations and trade unions; training and support; and the employment situation of fdcs.

There follows a discussion of three key issues which emerge from the review and, more broadly, the debates of fdcs and their organisations at a European and, indeed, a global level: centre-based care versus family day care - is one better than the other? freedom or security - the pros and cons for fdcs of being employed in organised schemes or self-employed; and professionalisation in family day care - is it possible and desirable?

In the final section, I put forward my own **conclusions and recommendations**, especially regarding these key issues. This section reflects my views, and not necessarily those of either the Network or the European Commission. I hope that they will stimulate discussion and contribute to shaping future policy.

An Appendix at the end of the report provides **names and addresses of contacts** in each country, for those wanting more information or to arrange exchanges of experience, together with details of how people can contact me to discuss the report further and to get more information about the International Family Day Care Organisation.

## OVERVIEW

### National Context

In most countries, compulsory schooling begins at around 6 years. Before compulsory school age, in many countries there has been extensive development of services of an educational or pedagogical nature for children aged 3 years and over (kindergartens, nursery schooling). In the Nordic countries, these services have developed to provide both education and care for children while their parents are at work. Elsewhere, these services have normally not been concerned with the care needs of employed parents, although in practice they may make an important contribution to the care arrangements made by employed parents.

For children under 3 years of age, nurseries or family day care have been the main services available. However, there has been a development in some countries of age-integrated centres, taking children both under and over 3 years, and of Parental Leave. Where this leave is paid, notably in the Nordic countries, most parents use this right to care for their children at home for much or all of the first year after birth.

The history of family day care is closely connected to the history of industrialisation. Of course, many mothers of young children had paid employment before, but in rural areas care for children was often provided by extended families and social networks (which in fact continue to be important sources of care in many countries for children under 3 years). When industries needed workers, the only way of surviving for many people was to leave their families and move to the expanding cities, in order to get a job, which in turn led to more children needing care outside the home. This happened at different times in different countries.

The modern fdc has many ancestors. Upper-class families used to have '*wet nurses*' to breast-feed their babies. The nurse would either stay in the home of the child, or take it to her home, where it would stay with the family of the nurse until it was considered old enough to manage normal food. The '*nanny*', who would live with a family to care for the children while they were young, is another predecessor - and can still be found in many countries in various forms and with various names.

The first evidence of public authorities taking an interest in the care of young children is as early as the 14th century in France. At that time '*child nurses*' looked after many young

children, either in the homes of the children or in their own homes. These nurses could be found through agencies and in 1350 the first regulation appeared, fixing the salaries of child-nurses and setting up a committee to supervise the business.

Denmark was the first country in modern times (1888) to regulate child care in private homes. In Belgium the first laws on family day care appeared in 1919, following World War One when many women had to join the labour forces in order to rebuild the country, leaving their children with private fdc's. Similar circumstances occurred in the UK after World War Two. In both countries the situation resulted in laws, stating that women had to register with their local authorities if they were caring for other people's children in their own home for payment.

In some countries family day care has developed from foster care. In Sweden foster care coordinators from the local authorities in the bigger cities started trying to find 'day foster care' for children in order to avoid the total separation of mother and child. In Luxembourg family day care today is seen as an extension of foster care, helping children to return to their own home after being in foster care. In France family day care and foster care still have many connections, the official term for the carer is the same and the laws and regulations are closely related. In Germany and Austria the connection has also been very close, and the same organisations have worked with foster care and with family day care.

### **The Contribution of Family Day Care**

Most countries have a shortage of services for young children, especially for children under 3 years. Only Sweden and Finland can report adequate coverage of publicly supported provision (and Denmark aims to achieve this by 1996). The need for services can be difficult to assess in many countries, not least because many children are cared for by relatives, especially grandparents, and some of these children might be placed in more formal services if they became available. Similarly, some mothers who currently are not employed or work only very short hours might also use formal services for their children if they became available and take the opportunity to find employment or work longer hours.

The inadequate statistics in many countries make it difficult to compare the contribution of family day care. For children under 3 years, though, family day care is **probably** the most commonly used formal service (by which I mean excluding care by relatives and family friends) in France, Denmark, Finland, Belgium, Ireland, UK, Germany, Austria, Norway, Luxembourg and Portugal; the main exceptions, where family day care appears to be uncommon as a type of provision for all ages, are Greece, Italy and Spain. The lack of complete certainty reflects not only inadequate statistics concerning registered or publicly

approved fdcs but the large number of non-registered fdcs in some countries.

For children over 3 years, and for children in compulsory school, family day care plays a less important role. Where nursery schooling or kindergarten is almost universal for children from 3 years onwards, then family day care at this point starts to provide a complementary service of care outside school hours. Otherwise, it may continue to provide full-time care for children until they reach compulsory school age.

## **Public Involvement**

### **Subsidising costs**

The costs of family day care can be divided into the direct costs, i.e. the salary of the carer and her expenses for food, accommodation and equipment; and indirect costs for administration, supervision and training. Different countries have different ways of dividing the costs between government (national, regional and/or local authorities) and parents. In some countries, public funding is extensively used for direct costs, either through payments made directly to fdcs or through subsidising parents directly, usually through some system of tax reduction. In some countries (for example, France) both systems operate. In the Nordic countries, most fdcs are directly funded by public authorities and usually are employees of local authorities.

Another way for public authorities to subsidise costs is to give financial support to private organisations which run organised family day care schemes (Germany, Austria, Belgium, France, Portugal). These schemes provide a variety of services, including usually support and supervision, and may in some cases also pay fdcs. Public funds may also support organisations run by fdcs, which may provide a range of support services to independent fdcs.

In a few countries (Netherlands, Germany, UK) some employer-supported family day care schemes have emerged as a response to shortages of publicly supported services.

### **Regulations**

The extent of the regulation of family day care varies enormously among the different countries covered in this report. Some countries have no laws or regulations at all; others only regulate fdcs employed by local authorities; while others regulate all fdcs in detail, making it illegal to operate in a totally private way. The usual matters regulated by law are the number of children allowed per carer, but the legislated ratio varies between countries, from 3 to 5 children.

## **Organisations and Unions**

In countries where fdcs are employed, they can join a trade union. In Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark the fdcs employed by local authorities can join the big unions for municipal workers, and membership is high except for Norway. In Norway and Austria, fdcs employed by private organisations can join the union of private employees.

Another kind of organisation has emerged in some countries with a large number of independent, self-employed fdcs. These organisations often have fdcs, parents and local authority workers as members, and their main aim is to improve the general quality of family day care for all concerned. The organisations for family day care in Germany and Austria used to be closely connected with foster care organisations and the French organisation still is, whereas the organisation in the UK only works with family day care. All these organisations receive some public funding and play important roles supplying support and training for fdcs, as well as acting as campaigning groups.

In Belgium both the French and the Flemish-speaking fdcs have started organisations to improve their working situation.

Private organisations which run organised family day care schemes are found in Norway, Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, France and Portugal.

## **Training and Support**

In no country is a special training required before a person can start work as a fdc. But in Sweden and Finland it is recommended that a fdc should have a basic training as a children's nurse (Sweden) or as a generic carer (Finland); applicants with these types of training are preferred when new fdcs are employed by local authorities, and if they do not have this training they will have to agree to obtain it when possible. When there is a shortage of trained applicants, the local authorities will often pay the fdc for her time while training, otherwise she will have to do it in her own time. In Portugal, Austria and Denmark a special introduction course is compulsory for all fdcs who wish to be part of an organised scheme, while non-compulsory introductory courses can be found in a number of countries, such as Netherlands, Belgium and Germany.

**In-service** training is available for fdcs in most countries with organised family day care schemes; in these countries, the local authority or organisation running the scheme often make the in-service training compulsory for the fdcs who usually get paid for their time. In-service training may also be offered to self-employed fdcs, usually by support organisations; the training is rarely compulsory nor are the fdcs paid for their time. The main exception is



France, where 60 hours training for all fdcs is required by law; all fdcs must have this training, whether they work in an organised scheme or are employed by the parents. This training can be spread over 1 year or longer.

All countries which regulate or organise family day care have some kind of system for supervising fdcs. There are many differences in the role of the supervisor. In some countries the control function is placed with officers from the local authorities while support is provided by other organisations. In other cases, and where fdcs are employed by local authorities, these two functions are in general placed with the same person.

Many countries set or recommend limits regarding how many fdcs a supervisor should be responsible for, ranging from 1 supervisor for 30 children including the children of the fdc (Norway) to a minimum of 35 fdcs (Finland) or a maximum of 40 fdcs (France).

Self-help groups of fdcs can be found in most countries. In Finland, Sweden and Denmark it is compulsory for employed fdcs to cooperate with each other to create a system to ensure substitute care in case a fdc is ill or otherwise unable to take her children. In UK and Germany some fdcs choose to work in groups for mutual support and inspiration, but often also to obtain better insurance.

In France, Sweden, Denmark and Finland many local authorities supply fdcs with meeting places, and in France, Sweden and Finland these places often have some person employed to support fdcs in their work. In Norway and Sweden it is becoming quite usual for fdcs to be attached to a nursery or other centre, where the leader of the centre supervises the fdcs, who can also use the centre's resources (e.g. equipment and toys).

### **Employment**

Three main employment statuses can be found. The fdc can be: self-employed; self-employed but attached to some kind of supporting system; or employed. Fdcs in a particular country are usually found in more than one of these statuses, although one status is usually predominant.

**Self-employed carers working completely independently** may either be entirely unregulated, or else they need some kind of public registration and approval. The former exist in almost all countries and in general we know very little of their situation. Self-employed, independent fdcs predominate in a number of countries, notably Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom.

**Self-employed carers may be attached to an organisation**, which may be a local body or part of a regional or national body. The organisation may pay the fdcs and place children with them, as in Portugal and Belgium, or it may act primarily as a support and referral agency, as in the Netherlands. In Belgium and Netherlands, fdcs are regarded more as volunteers than self-employed workers, with payment viewed as an allowance to cover expenses.

**Family day carers who are employees** are most common in Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway, France and Austria, and account for a majority of family day carers in the first three Nordic countries. In Sweden, Denmark and Finland, these fdcs are usually employed by local authorities; in Austria they are employed by private organisations; and in Norway and France by public authorities or private organisations.

It has proved impossible to establish precisely what fdcs earn in different countries. In order to do that, all aspects of the taxation and social security systems must be taken into consideration. Besides, earnings can differ a good deal between different areas and even between individual fdcs, depending on how many children and how many hours they work as well as the fees they charge. However, overall it can be stated that fdcs earn less than other workers in services for young children, who are themselves often low paid (especially those who work with children under 3 years). But there are big differences from country to country. Highest earnings and best employment conditions are found among employed fdcs in the Nordic countries. France is the only country to regulate the income of self-employed and independent fdcs; a minimum wage is set by law, but parents may pay more.

The tax system creates problems for fdcs in many countries. Where the incomes of couples are jointly taxed, the partner who earns most (usually the husband) may pay a higher tax rate if the other partner earns more than a certain level. In these circumstances, fdcs will often experience resistance from their husbands to earning above this minimum level, because it will mean him paying higher tax. This contributes to keeping the wages of fdcs low, which can mean also that they are not eligible for any pension.

Other working conditions, such as holidays, sick leave and pensions, depend on the employment situation of the fdc. In general, fdcs who are employed get these benefits as part of their job, whereas self-employed fdcs and those who are seen as volunteers do not and have to make their own arrangements.

Children often have to spend more time with their fdcs than normal working hours, because parents have to travel to and from work. In addition to poor pay and conditions, therefore,

fdcs often work long hours. Unlike staff in centres, they cannot organise a work rota amongst a group of workers to ensure that they work a normal day while still meeting the needs of the parents.

## NATIONAL SUMMARIES

### AUSTRIA

#### National Context

Austria is a federal republic with 9 autonomous regions or *Länder*. While the federal government makes general laws, the individual states make their own detailed laws. This means that services for young children differ considerably between the *Länder*.

The compulsory school age is 6 years. Before that, Austria has a strong tradition of kindergartens. They can take children from 12 months but very few start before 3 years; the percentage of children going to kindergarten varies a good deal between the *Länder*, from 49% to 100%. Kindergartens are seen more as an educational provision than as a way of caring for children while their parents are working.

Services for children under 3 years include provision in nurseries. Parents are entitled to 2 years Parental Leave, to be divided between mother and father as they choose (with a low flat-rate payment)<sup>2</sup>.

For many years, nurseries were the only publicly supported type of service available for children under 3 years. But in the 1970s, as more women started working outside the home more non-parental care was needed for young children. Different organisations started organising family day care, including organisations supported by the Catholic Church and political parties. In 1976 the first independent organisation was started, and for 10 years that worked without any public funding.

In 1979 the Ministry of Social Affairs decided to fund three private organisations to develop a model for family day care. These organisations could employ fdc's. In 1989 government funding was made available for other organisations.

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<sup>2</sup>Full details of maternity, paternity and parental leave in each country are given in a 1994 Network report *Leave Arrangements for Workers with Children*, available free of charge in English, French and German from the European Commission (DGV/A/3), 200 rue de la loi, B-1049 Brussels.

Nowadays family day care exists in four different forms. The fdc can be: employed by a private organisation; self-employed, but affiliated to an organisation; self-employed, with approval from her local authority; or working illegally, without this approval.

### **The Contribution of Family Day Care**

Fdcs provide for children of all ages, but mostly work with children under 3 years. The amount of family day care varies greatly in different areas. Wien for instance has a tradition of nursery care; few children are in family day care, which is much more common in rural districts.

In July 1993, there were just over 4,000 children in approved family day care, compared to 6,700 in nurseries. Approximately 1,000 fdcs work through an organisation, while another 1,000-1,500 work privately, but with local authority approval. The number of illegal fdcs is not known.

### **Public Involvement**

#### Subsidising costs

The financial support of family day care is regulated by the Labour-market Support Act from 1993. In order to promote more family day care the regional government funds half of the salary costs of newly employed fdcs during the first 3 years. It is still uncertain what will happen after these 3 years. The regional government can also fund, partly or fully, the administration costs of local organisations if they provide at least 10 new family day care homes a year. Parents pay a monthly fee to the local organisation according to the number of hours a week they need care. The fee is the same, no matter whether the fdcs are employed or not, but the parents can get a reduction if their income is low. Training of fdcs can be subsidised by individual *Länder* governments, but no uniform standards exist.

#### Regulation

According to the Youth Welfare Act (*Jugendwohlfahrtsgesetz*), from 1990 all fdcs must be approved by their local authority. The family day care organisations, which must be recognised by the child care bureau of the *Land*, must organise training and supervision for the fdcs in order to get financial support.

Each of the *Länder* have their own laws that more fully regulate family day care. There are no specific regulations concerning the amount of training and supervision for fdcs. There are no federal rules about the number of children that a fdc is allowed to have, but an agreement exists between the federal organisations permitting no more than 4 children per fdc.

## Unions or Organisations

Three big organisations organise family day care in Austria. The Federal Association of Family Day Carers (*Tagesmutter-Dachverband*) is politically and religiously independent and has organisations in all 9 *Länder*. Austrian People's Help (*Österreichische Volkshilfe*) is connected with the Social Democratic Party, but does not have organisations in all states. Both organisations only work with fdcs who they employ.

The Austrian Support Services (*Österreichische Hilfswerk*) was originally connected with the Conservative Party. It works in particular in one *Land*, Niederösterreich, but has organisations in other *Länder* as well. This organisation does not employ fdcs, but supports them in different ways.

Fdcs can belong to the major trade union, *Gewerkschaft für Privatangestellte*, in the section for private employees, and the union negotiates with the *Dachverband*. However, in practice, only a few fdcs are members of the union.

## Training and Support

These organisations offer various training courses for fdcs affiliated to them. The organisations of the *Dachverband* have agreed on a minimum standard of initial training consisting of 70-140 hours over 3 to 6 months. The training programme especially focuses on cooperation between fdcs and parents, developmental psychology, the care process, rearing models and first aid. The local organisations create their own training courses based on this general programme.

After this initial training the organisations of the *Dachverband* provide in-service training 5 times a year, and an individual interview twice a year at which the fdc's work and future plans are reviewed; both are compulsory. The organisations' staff visit the fdcs regularly and organise group supervision sessions, for up to 10 fdcs, once a month for 2 hours. The staff can vary in number, but for instance the organisation in Wien has a staff of 3 social workers, 1 social nurse, 1 lawyer, 1 teacher and 1 secretary serving 62 fdcs. In general the local organisations provide 1 staff per 20 fdcs.

The organisations of the *Volkshilfe* have a training and support programme similar to the *Dachverband*. But the organisations of the *Hilfswerk* have a somewhat different system. Fdcs are self-employed but linked to one of the organisations from which they receive support and supervision. The *Hilfswerk* does not believe in a long formal training and wants to mix theory and practical work. An introductory 2 day training course is compulsory, but after that

in-service training and supervision is offered when needed by fdcs. The *Hilfswerk* partly works with volunteers who can support and supervise fdcs locally, but family therapists give supervision in groups, at which attendance is compulsory, and 1 therapist serves around 70 fdcs.

### **Employment**

Fdcs employed by the *Dachverband* and the *Volkshilfe* are paid per child according to how many hours a week the child is cared for. The hours for each child are discussed with the parents and an agreement is made; extra hours are paid as overtime by the parents. Fdcs receive 2 extra monthly salaries, one in summer and one at Christmas. They are entitled to 5 weeks holidays, and to paid sick leave and other social benefits.

Fdcs working with the *Hilfswerk* are self-employed and their salaries follow the recommendations of each *Land*. Parents pay their fdc direct and can get subsidies from their local authority related to their income. The fdcs of the *Hilfswerk* have to make their own payments for social security.

Self-employed carers who have local authority approval have the same employment situation as those of the *Hilfswerk*.

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## **BELGIUM**

### **National Context**

Belgium is divided into three autonomous communities - the Flemish-speaking, French-speaking and German-speaking - and responsibility for services for young children has been allocated to this Community level. Regulating and funding services, except nursery education, is the responsibility of an agency in each Community - *Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance (ONE)* in the French-speaking Community, *Kind en Gezin (K&G)* in the Flemish-speaking Community and *Dienst für Kind und Familie (DKF)* in the German-speaking Community. Since responsibility was ceded to the Communities in the 1980s, there is increasing divergence in policy and practice.

The compulsory school age is 6 years. Before that, Belgium has a strong tradition of nursery education for children over 2.5 years, with nearly all children attending this service. Services for children under 3 years include centre-based provision in nurseries (for children from 0 to 36 months) and *pre-gardiennaats/peutertuins* (for children from 18 to 36 months). Each

parent can take a 6-12 months 'career break' after Maternity Leave, subject to their employer's agreement (with a low flat-rate payment).

A law was passed in 1919 which placed the responsibility for child health and the control of day care settings (including family day care) with a government agency, in order to encourage and develop the care and protection of children. Organised family day care originated in Brugge in the 1970s. In 1972 local authorities in the city created an agency for working parents with babies, which made provision for these children with affiliated fdcs. From this initiative, legislation followed in 1975 setting out conditions for the funding of recognised agencies to run organised family day care schemes.

Nowadays throughout Belgium there are three different forms of family day care: fdcs affiliated to a local agency in an organised scheme; self-employed fdcs approved by the respective Community agency; and illegal fdcs, who operate without this approval.

### **The Contribution of Family Day Care**

Family day care is used especially for children under 3 years, but also provides out-of-school care for older children. In the Flemish-speaking Community, organised family day care is available to provide out-of-school care for children from 3 to 5 years who attend nursery school. But organised family day care is limited to children under 3 years in the French-speaking Community.

The amount of family day care varies. Brussels has relatively little, but it is more common in more rural areas. Family day care plays a particularly important role in the Flemish-speaking Community. In 1992 more children were in family day care than in centre-based services (58% v 42%). In all just over 23,000 children were in family day care, mostly children under 3 years. 72% of the children were cared for by employed carers in organised schemes.

In the French-speaking Community, the number of children in centres and family day care was almost the same - about 8,500 in 1993. Only 950 children were with self-employed fdcs, the rest being in organised schemes.

### **Public Involvement**

#### **Subsidising costs**

Agencies running organised family day care schemes, both private organisations and local authorities, are subsidised by *K&G* or *ONE*. Subsidies cover administrative costs and payments to fdcs. Parents make an income-related payment to the agencies, as a contribution



to costs; the level of parental payment is determined at Community level.

Parents using an independent approved fdc or a fdc who is part of an organised scheme for a child under 3 years are allowed to reduce their taxable income by 80% of the cost up to a maximum of BF 345 per day per child.

### **Regulations**

All fdc's must be approved by a public authority. In the Flemish-speaking Community, an independent fdc is visited by an inspection official from *K&G* at least once every 3 years, and by a social worker 4 times a year; if she does not meet the requirements concerning premises, hygiene, nutrition, insurance, good conduct and health certificates, she can lose her approval. An independent fdc is allowed to care for a maximum of 5 children under 6 years simultaneously, her own children included. It is possible to care for more children, but in this case the provision is re-classified as a 'children's home'; no formal education is required to set up a children's home.

In the French-speaking Community, independent fdc's get their approval from local authorities on the recommendation of a children's health centre run by *ONE*. They are supervised by local nurses, under the direction of the doctor of the children's health centre, and are allowed to care for up to 3 children at any one time.

Fdc's affiliated to agencies in organised schemes are allowed to care for a maximum of 4 children at any one time in the Flemish-speaking Community and for 3 children in the French-speaking Community.

The working conditions for the agencies organising family day care schemes are regulated for both Communities. Regulations include staffing requirements, stating that an agency should employ a social nurse or social assistant for the support and counselling of both fdc's and parents. In the Flemish-speaking Community, fdc's in schemes must receive 10 visits a year and participate in 4 training sessions a year. In the French Community the agency has to ensure the continuous supervision of fdc's by social nurses.

### **Unions or Organisations**

Fdc's both in the Flemish-speaking and the French-speaking Communities have started organisations to improve their working situation. Both organisations are open to all fdc's, whether independent or in organised schemes, and are quickly expanding.

## **Training and Support**

No formal training is required before employment. But in the Flemish-speaking Community an initial course is being discussed, and agencies must offer their affiliated fdcs 4 training sessions a year at which attendance is compulsory. In 1985, a training centre for childcare workers connected to the University of Gent was established with the support of *K&G* and the Van Leer Foundation. The staff at the centre are psychologists and teachers. They organise in-service training for the whole Flemish-speaking Community for both workers in services, including fdcs, and supervisors. They also provide educational material, produce videos to be used in training of carers and publish a popular magazine.

The Flemish fdcs in organised schemes are visited 10 times a year for guidance and supervision. Many agencies provide other support, including drop-in meetings for affiliated fdcs and toy libraries.

In the French-speaking Community, continuous training is compulsory for all workers in child care services, but the training is not subsidised. O.N.E. recommends that fdcs in organised schemes receive training, but there are no guidelines specifying how much.

The agencies running organised schemes in the Flemish-speaking Community are subsidised for at least 1 half-time support worker for every 15 fdcs and according to the numbers of children for which they care. In the French- and the German-speaking Communities a full-time support worker is subsidised for every 20 fdc.

## **Employment**

Fdcs in organised schemes are paid by the agencies, but they are not regarded as employed; payment is treated as 'expenses' and is tax-free. Independent self-employed fdcs are paid directly by parents; most of their income is regarded as compensation for expenses.

As fdcs are not regarded as employed or else have very low income, they do not have any social benefits, such as provision for sick leave or holidays or any pensions. Not all fdcs agree with this situation and the way their work is regarded. In the last 2 years, demands for change have increased.

## DENMARK

### **National Context**

The compulsory school age is 7 years, but most 6 year olds go to part-time 'kindergarten classes' in schools. For younger children, Denmark has the most extensive system of publicly funded services in Europe. Services include family day care (mostly for children from 1 to 3 years), centre-based provision in nurseries (for children from 0 to 36 months), in kindergartens (for children from 3 to 6 years) and in age-integrated institutions (for children from 0 to 6 years and even older); these services are open for 9-10 hours a day, throughout the year, so that there is no need for additional care for example to cover the time when children are not at kindergarten.

Families are entitled to 10 weeks Parental Leave after Maternity Leave and each parent is entitled to a further 6 months leave (plus an additional 6 months with their employer's agreement) (both with a high flat-rate payment). The Government has made a commitment to provide by 1996 a place in a publicly funded service for all children over 12 months; it is expected that most children under this age will be at home with a parent on leave.

As far back as 1888 a law was passed stating that women who cared for children for a payment must be registered with their local authorities.

Public, organised family day care schemes started in the mid-1960s, at a time when increasing numbers of women were joining the labour force. In 1964 the first law was passed, defining the concept of family day care and setting up regulations for state funding; the first public scheme began the next year. In 1980 public family day care was officially acknowledged by law as equal in quality to centre-based provision, for children under 3 years.

Nowadays, most family day care is provided in organised schemes by fdcs employed by local authorities. There are a few independent, self-employed fdcs, some of whom are approved by local authorities, some of whom operate illegally and some of whom do not need official approval because they only care for 1 or 2 children.

### **The Contribution of Family Day Care**

The amount of family day care varies. Generally it is more common in smaller and rural local authorities, while centre-based services are more common in larger towns and cities; it has proved difficult to find adequate suitable fdcs for organised schemes, especially in city areas. Organised family day care is also most common for children under 3 years, although

it is also used by children over 3 years and for out-of-school care. In 1992, 71,000 children under 7 years were cared for in organised family day care schemes, equivalent to 29% of all children in publicly funded services; this consisted of 56,690 children under 3 years old - 61% of this age group in public services - and only 15,500 children aged 3 to 6 years - 9% of this older age group in public services.

A survey in 1989 showed the predominance of organised family day care compared to private family day care. Twenty-nine per cent of children under 3 years were in organised family day care schemes, more than twice the proportion of children with private fdc's (12%). For children aged 3 to 6 years, the proportions were 10% and 4% respectively.

### **Public Involvement**

#### **Subsidising costs**

Local authorities fund the administrative costs of organised family day care and payments to fdc's in these schemes. Parents make an income-related payment, as a contribution to costs. The maximum parents can pay is 30% of the cost of a service and often they pay less, for example if they have low incomes or more than 1 child attending services. In 1994, parent contributions accounted for 23% of the total cost of organised family day care schemes.

#### **Regulations**

Family day care is regulated by the Social Assistance Act; the law is supplemented by several regulations from the Ministry of Social Affairs. All fdc's providing for more than 2 children must be approved by the local authority and no fdc is allowed to look after more than 5 children. A 1992 law allows 2 or more fdc's to work together in one home with up to 10 children.

The local authorities are responsible for all family day care, and they have a high degree of autonomy. For instance they can decide whether the fdc should be paid for looking after her own children under 3 years by including them in the number of children for which she is paid to care.

In 1993 a law was passed requiring that local authorities establish boards of parents for public child care services. In family day care, half of all parents using an organised scheme must request the setting up of a board. These boards give parents the opportunity to influence all matters concerning services, except the employment of staff. By now 75% of all local authorities have established boards of parents for their family day care schemes.

### **Unions or Organisations**

Fdcs employed by local authorities in organised schemes can join the trade union of municipally employed workers; 98% are members and consequently are members of an unemployment fund that provides them with 90% of normal wages if they become unemployed. Family day care has its own section within the union, which includes both fdcs and local authority staff working with fdcs. The president of this section is a fdc, and the vice-president a family day care supervisor.

### **Training and Support**

No formal training is required before employment. But when employed in an organised scheme, the fdcs are offered a 38 hour introductory course, including information on the organisation, practice with an experienced fdc and basic child development. After 6 months employment, a 74 hours basic training course is offered, which covers the daily work with children, psychology and relations with the parents of the children and other carers. After this, several other courses are available, ranging from 24 to 37 hours, including subjects such as stimulation and activities with children, children with special needs, immigrant and refugee children, teamwork, cooperation with parents etc.

The training courses have been worked out in cooperation between the trade union and the Ministry of Social Affairs. For some time, however, it has been evident that the courses for fdcs need to be reviewed, and discussions are now taking place about the future structure of training for fdcs.

All training is conducted during the daytime and fdcs receive full payment even when training is conducted at weekend courses. Local authorities pay for the training and often cooperate in setting up courses. However, this local discretion means that the amount of training available varies a great deal.

Each local authority has a family day care office, with a leader and a number of assistants (supervisors) who are all trained pre-school-teachers. The number of supervisors was until 1990 regulated by a recommendation from the Ministry of Social Affairs that there should be 1 full-time supervisor per 50 children. In 1990 this was abolished and the local authorities are now responsible for the standards. In 1992 the average number of children for each full-time supervisor was 58, according to the Ministry of Social Affairs, ranging from 40 to 120 children.

Supervisors are responsible for approving fdcs for employment in organised schemes, for placing children with suitable fdcs and for supporting and supervising the fdcs. They are also

responsible for approving and inspecting private fdcs.

Supervisors are supposed to visit each fdc in an organised scheme once or twice a month and to arrange groups where fdcs and their children can meet once every week or fortnight. They provide toys and equipment and are available every morning on the telephone. They also meet with parents.

Most fdcs in organised schemes belong to a group of 8 to 10 other fdcs, where they can get mutual support and inspiration. Most groups have their own premises, where they and their children can meet during the daytime at least once a week; the supervisor for the group attends these meetings. In the groups, fdcs share activities with the children. At group meetings in the evening, fdcs plan joint activities of all kinds, and organise substitute care amongst themselves to provide cover for when fdcs are ill, on holiday or otherwise unable to take their children; fdcs are paid for attending this evening meetings.

### **Employment**

Fdcs in organised schemes are paid and employed by local authorities. Nearly all of these fdcs (90%) are guaranteed a basic wage, based on caring for 3 or 4 children, even if their local authorities are unable to place that number of children with them. One third of the payment is tax deductible, to cover meals and other expenses.

Basic working hours for fdcs are 47 hours per week. They have the same social benefits as other workers, including a right to 5 weeks of paid holiday, paid maternity and parental leave, full payment in case of illness and pension rights.

Independent fdcs are self-employed. They negotiate payment directly with parents and operate outside the social security system.

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## **FINLAND**

### **National Context**

Finland was for many years under Swedish and then Russian rule, only becoming an independent state in 1917. About 7% of the Finnish population still speak Swedish as their first language. Swedish-speaking Finns are mainly found in the Helsinki area and along the West coast. Helsinki has a special Social Services office for Swedish-speakers, dealing with family day care among other matters.

The compulsory school age is 7 years, although at 6 years children are offered preschool. For younger children, Finnish services include centres open on a full day basis, for children aged 0 to 2 years, 3 to 6 years or 0 to 6 years, as well as part-time 'open centres' mainly intended for parents caring for children at home. Since 1990, parents with a child under 3 years have had a right to either a place in a publicly funded service or to care for their child at home with financial support. Parents are entitled to take Parental Leave until children are 3 years old, to be divided between mother and father as they choose (most of this period is covered by a low flat-rate payment).

When women began to join the labour market in increasing numbers, in the 1950s, family day care became the most common form of child care. Legislation in 1973 required local authorities to provide publicly funded or supervised child care services, including family day care, to meet need. The 1980 Day Care Act includes objectives for child care services and qualitative standards, which are the same for all types of child care service. It also guaranteed public subsidies for services, resulting in a large increase in places.

Nowadays most family day care is provided in organised schemes by fdc's employed by local authorities. There are also some independent, self-employed fdc's approved by local authorities.

### **The Contribution of Family Day Care**

Family day care is mostly used for children under 3 years, but is also common for children from 3 to 6 years and for out-of-school care. In 1992, 89,460 children under 7 years were in organised family day care schemes, equivalent to 42% of all children in publicly funded services. The proportion for children under 3 years was 50% compared to 38% for children aged 3 to 6 years.

Statistics in 1992 show that Finland had a small surplus of child care places, mainly because of growing unemployment. The tendency is for family day care to decrease as a proportion of all public child care services.

### **Public Involvement**

#### **Subsidising costs**

Most of the costs of organised family day care schemes are funded by national and local government (each pays 42% of costs). Parents make an income-related payment to cover the remaining costs. Private family day care gets no direct funding. But since 1990 all families with children under 3 years have a right to a place within a publicly funded service or to a 'Home Care Allowance' which can be used either to support one parent caring for a child

at home or as a contribution towards the cost of using private services, including independent, self-employed fdcs. In practice, this Allowance is not often used to pay for private family day care; in two-thirds of cases where an allowance is paid a parent stays at home and in many of the remaining cases the parents use relatives or friends to provide care.

### **Regulations**

All fdcs must be approved by their local authority. The law demands that the family day care home is suitable, that attention must be paid to health and safety, that there must be at least 7 square metres of space per child and that fdcs are capable of looking after children. Consequently, employed fdcs must have a minimum of 250 hours of training.

The maximum number of children that fdcs may have is 4 below school age, including their own, and 1 school-age child. During the last decade, group family day care has been allowed, in which 2 or 3 fdcs work together either in one of their homes or in some other 'home like' premises.

### **Unions or Organisations**

Fdcs employed by local authorities can join the trade union of the municipal workers, and 81% are members.

### **Training and Support**

From 1980, all fdcs employed in organised schemes have been required to attend a special 250 hour training course either before their employment or during the first 6 months. If the local authority needs more fdcs it will pay for the training, otherwise the carers pay themselves. The training course dealt in particular with child care, creative work, psychology, social policy, nutrition and hygiene. The training was not however recognised for other types of jobs.

In 1993, the Board of Education introduced a new basic exam, which requires a basic training course common to all workers in social and health care and which is recognised for further training purposes. Many local authorities have already adapted this training and many fdcs are attending courses (for further details, see the **Recommendations** section at the end of this report).

Fdcs have to attend a first-aid training course of 16 hours, and after initial training all employed fdcs receive in-service training of 20 hours a year.



Local authorities employ officers to supervise publicly funded and private family day care; each officer supervises a minimum of 35 fdcs. They visit fdcs regularly. During their first year of employment this means a visit every second week, but as fdcs grow more experienced the frequency of visits depends on the need. Whenever a new child is placed with a fdc, the supervisor will visit and help both the fdc and the parents discuss their needs and wishes and set up their agreement.

The supervisors may have training for social work or as a teacher, but most often have trained to work in centres for pre-school children. The local authorities arrange in-service training for them. They may join a special section of a trade union for social workers.

### **Employment**

Fdcs in organised schemes are paid and employed by local authorities. A fdc with 4 children including her own is regarded as employed full-time; 1 child is regarded as 33% of full-time, 2 children as 55% and 3 children as 77%. If a fdc also has a school-age child, she is paid more. Full-time earnings are rather less than for centre-based workers. Fdcs are also paid an allowance for food and other costs, based on the number of children cared for per day.

Basic working hours for fdcs are 90 hours for 2 weeks. Any additional hours are paid at a higher rate or can be compensated by taking time off at a later date. They have the same social benefits as other workers, including a right to paid holidays, parental and sickness leave, pensions and health services.

Fdcs in organised groups agree to take children from other carers in case of illness, holidays or training.

Independent or private fdcs are self-employed and negotiate payment directly with parents.

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## **FRANCE**

### **National Context**

The compulsory school age is 6 years. Before that, France has a long tradition of nursery education for children over 2 years, attended by nearly all children aged 3 to 5 years and a third of 2 year olds. Other services for children under 3 include centre-based provision in nurseries (*crèche collectif* and *crèche parentale*).

Parents are entitled to take Parental Leave until children are 3 years old, to be divided between mother and father as they choose (with a low flat-rate payment if there are 2 or more children in the family).

France has the longest known history of public regulation of child care in Europe. A law in 1350 set payment for foster mothers and established a committee of coordinators. The first organised family day care scheme (*crèche familiale*) was established in 1959 and a law in 1977 required all fdcs to be registered by public authorities.

There are three different types of family day care: Fdcs employed by a local authority, département or publicly funded private organisation in an organised scheme; fdcs approved by public authorities and employed by the parents; and illegal fdcs who operate without this approval.

### **The Contribution of Family Day Care**

Family day care is used especially for children under 3 years, but also provides some out-of-school care for older children.

In 1994, self-employed and approved fdcs were estimated to care for 340,000 children under 6 years, most (220,000) being aged under 3 years. Family day care in organised schemes provides for just over a third of children under 3 years in publicly funded services (excluding the large number of 2 year olds at nursery schools) - 66,000 children compared to 123,000 children in publicly funded nurseries. The number of places in organised schemes nearly doubled between 1981 and 1993, growing faster than places in nurseries.

There are no statistics for the number of children with illegal fdcs.

### **Public Involvement**

#### **Subsidising costs**

Public authorities fund most of the costs of organised family day care schemes - on average 64% in 1994. Public funding is divided between local authorities (which contributed 35% of total costs), *départements* (7%) and regional family allowance funds or *caisses d'allocation familiales (CAFs)* (22%) which play an important role in funding all child care services and stimulating the development of new services for young children and their families. Parents make an income-related payment to cover most of the remaining costs (34% in 1994).

Parents using fdcs (whether in organised schemes or self-employed and approved) for children under 6 years are allowed to reduce their tax payments by the equivalent of 25%

of costs up to a maximum cost of FF 15,000 a year per child (i.e. if the total costs for a child are FF 15,000 a year, tax payments are reduced by FF 3,750 (25%), but this is the maximum amount that can be deducted from tax payments for any one child). In addition for parents using self-employed but approved fdcs, CAFs make: a payment to social security funds to cover parents' social security contributions as employers; and a payment to parents of FF 530 a month for a child under 3 years and FF 388 a month for a child aged 3 to 5 years (*Aide à la Famille pour l'Emploi d'une Assistante Maternelle Agréée - AFEAMA*).

### Regulations

All fdcs must be approved by a public authority - the Maternal and Child Welfare Service (*Protection Maternelle et Infantile - PMI*) of the Conseil Général in each *département*. Approval is given after inspection of the home and on condition that the fdc can guarantee the health, safety and development of the child. Approval is valid for 5 years, but can be withdrawn. The maximum number of children allowed is 3 (including the family day carer's own children), and all fdcs must receive a minimum of 60 hours training over 5 years.

Self-employed, approved fdcs have a special status by law, and regulations stipulate minimum wages and other employment benefits.

### Unions or Organisations

The first organisation for fdcs was started in 1971. This organisation (*L'Amicale Nationale des Familles d'Accueil et des Assistantes Maternelles*) provides a link between public authorities and fdcs, distributing new laws and regulations to its members. It is also involved in developing training programmes and helping fdcs form local groups.

### Training and Support

No formal training is required before becoming a fdc, but once approved there is a compulsory requirement for at least 60 hours training over 5 years; fdcs with more than 5 years experience do not have to take this training. This can be divided into a basic introductory course followed by further in-service training courses, but it is recommended that the 60 hours is provided during one year rather than being spread over 5 years. The aim of the training is to help fdcs consider their behaviour with the children and there are three main items: *savoir etre* (knowing how to be), *savoir faire* (knowing what to do) and *savoir* (knowledge).

Organised schemes are led by a director, who usually has trained as a children's nurse (*puéricultrice*). She can be responsible for a maximum of 40 fdcs; if there are more in a scheme, then an assistant must also be employed who may have trained as an educator

(*éducatrice de jeunes enfants*) to work in a nursery. The director of an organised scheme is responsible for administering the budget, collecting parents' fees, employing fdcs, placing children and supporting fdcs and parents. She must visit fdcs regularly and provide a training programme for them.

Publicly funded support services for self-employed and approved fdcs - *les relais assistantes maternelles* - are also being developed, partly with the help of funding from CAFs, which in 1994 covered 69% of the cost of this service with the rest paid for by local authorities (22%) or *départements* (7%). These services may be managed by public authorities or private organisations and are organised in many different ways. Some simply have a worker (*animateur*) to offer advice. Others have a range of staff including nurses, social workers and family therapists; as well as advice, guidance and information they may offer training sessions, opportunities for fdcs to meet and for children to socialise and play, arrange excursions and so on. In 1994, there were 200 *relais* and it is recommended that there should be 1 *relais* for every 100 fdcs.

### **Employment**

Fdcs in organised schemes are employed and paid by the public authority or private organisation responsible for the scheme. Minimum payment for fdcs, whether in organised schemes or self-employed and paid by parents, is regulated (although due to a shortage of fdcs, they may often be paid more). Earnings of fdcs are less than for nursery workers.

If fdcs have to work more than 10 hours a day, then an additional payment must be made. All fdcs, whether in schemes or self-employed, have the same rights to social security as other workers and are entitled to 5 weeks of paid holiday.

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## **GERMANY**

### **National Context**

Germany is a federal republic with 16 autonomous states or *Länder*. Responsibility for child care legislation and policy rests with the *Länder* governments. This means that services for young children can differ considerably between the *Länder*.

Before unification in 1990, Germany had two different child care systems. In the new *Länder* (former East Germany), nearly all mothers of young children had full-time jobs and nearly all children under 6 years were in publicly funded centre-based services (nurseries and full-

time kindergartens). By contrast, the former West Germany had much lower employment levels, with many women working part-time; there was little publicly funded provision of any kind for children under 3 and kindergarten provision for children over 3 was mostly part-time.

Compulsory schooling starts between 6 and 6.5 years. Before that, there is extensive publicly-funded kindergarten provision for children aged 3 years and over although with lower levels of provision and much less full-day provision in the former West Germany; a commitment has now been made to provide every child with a kindergarten place by 1996. Services for children under 3 include centre-based provision in nurseries (for children from 0 to 36 months) and some age-integrated centres (taking children from 0 to 6 years). Although the amount of nursery provision in the former East Germany has decreased since 1990, there is still far more available in this part of Germany. In addition, parents are entitled to take Parental Leave until children are 3 years old, to be divided between mother and father as they choose (with a low earnings-related payment until children are 2 years old).

In 1973 the women's magazine *Brigitte* published an article on family day care in Sweden, suggesting that this type of more organised provision should be established in West Germany. Previously, only independent, private fdcs had been available. But as the reaction to the article was so strong, the federal Ministry of Youth, Family and Health decided to commission the *Deutsches Jugendinstitut (DJI)* in Munich to setting up a model-project on family day care. This project ran from 1974 - 79 in 11 *länder* and involved 420 fdcs, leading to more than 50 groups of parents and fdcs forming local organisations in order to create organised and supervised family day care.

Almost all fdcs are self-employed. They work either totally independently or through (but not paid by) an organisation, which supplies advice and training. There are a few projects where fdcs are employed by their local authorities, but so far these are very rare.

### **The Contribution of Family Day Care**

Although family day care is recommended by the Children and Youth Act for children under 3, in practice only about a third of children in this type of provision are this age. The remainder are divided between children aged 3 to 6 years and children at school, in most cases using family day care for care outside kindergarten or school hours. In 1990 there were 43,615 registered fdcs in Germany. Probably there are at least the same number of unregistered or private fdcs. It has been estimated that 2% of all children under 3 years attend approved fdcs and 2% fdcs who operate without contact with the authorities.

The contribution of family day care in providing care differs in different *Länder*, and is particularly low in former East Germany where there was little family day care before 1990.

By law, the local authorities must provide publicly funded family day care for children with special needs. A project in Berlin has trained fdc's to be able to care for disabled children.

### **Public Involvement**

#### **Subsidising costs**

In some *Länder*, local fdc organisations (*Verein*) are partly funded by public authorities or they receive funding for specific projects. The *Bundesverband* (see below) is subsidised by the federal government.

Low income families can apply for subsidies from their local government, if they use a fdc who is approved; 65% of all eligible families do this. In Berlin, an upper limit of 6,000 subsidised places has been set, irrespective of need; by contract, Hamburg subsidises all families according to their income.

Because of the widespread shortage of provision, some employers have begun to subsidise fdc's for use by their workers. In some areas, private firms fund family day care agencies which help parents find an appropriate fdc and supervises the arrangement.

#### **Regulations**

Fdc's can choose to seek local authority approval, but this is not compulsory; however, subsidies for low income families can only be given if they use an approved fdc. By law no fdc should care for more than 3 children, not including their own. The local authorities, who are responsible for approving and supervising fdc's, employ supervisors; but as there are no guidelines or regulations on the number of fdc's per supervisor, supervision is often not very frequent.

There are no regulations on training or support, but legislation says that local authorities should support organisations of fdc.

#### **Unions or Organisations**

In 1978 a federal association of organisations for fdc's (*Tagesmütter Bundesverband für Kinderbetreuung in Tagespflege e.V.*) was established by the local organisations to promote training for fdc's and to increase public acceptance of their work. The *Bundesverband* has played an important role in the development of family day care in Germany and is subsidised by the federal government. About one third of approved fdc's are members of an organisation

affiliated to the *Bundesverband*.

Since unification, the *Bundesverband* has worked in the new *Länder* to help organise family day care, which is proving of particular interest in the rural areas. In 1994 the *Bundesverband* had its first post-unification national congress.

### **Training and Support**

No formal training is required before becoming a fdc. The *Bundesverband* has a body of experts working on a qualification programme with recommendations on training courses for fdc's, which hopefully will be put into action by 1996. Locally, family day care organisations may offer training courses of varying content and length. In some *Länder*, these local organisations are funded by local authorities to produce training projects; for example, in Hamburg, this has led to an ambitious training programme offered to all fdc's.

The local organisations are the most important means of support for fdc's and usually they employ staff for this purpose. A few organisations even have a centre where fdc's can meet. But, as already noted, only about one third of all fdc's are members of an organisation.

Supervisory and support staff, both in local authorities and local organisations, have mostly trained as social workers or as social pedagogues.

### **Employment**

Fdc's are generally self-employed and negotiate payment directly with parents. Some *Länder*, however, have laws or regulations specifying minimum and maximum levels of payment. The amounts vary between the different *Länder* (e.g. the maximum payment varies from DM 350 a month per full-time child to DM 950). Local organisations help fdc's to make agreements with parents, both concerning payment and working hours. Fdc's are paid per child, so that income depends on the number of children for whom they cared. There are no limits on payment in the free market, for fdc's who operate without local authority approval; their payment can be much higher than that of the approved fdc's.

There are no regulations or guidelines on working hours. As they are self-employed, fdc's are responsible for arranging their own insurance; they have no rights to paid sick leave or holidays although they may get some through agreements with parents. The *Bundesverband* works to obtain subsidies for old age pensions for fdc's.

## GREECE

The compulsory school age is 5.5 years. Before then, there is nursery education (for 3-4 hours a day) for children aged over 4 and kindergarten provision, open for a full day of 9-10, for children aged over 2.5 years. There is limited public provision for children under 3 years, either in nurseries or in centres which combine nursery and kindergarten provision.

Each parent is entitled to 3 months unpaid Parental Leave.

Family day care is not regulated and all fdcs are self-employed, dealing directly with parents. There are no unions or organisations for fdcs, and little in the way of training and support. There is no information or estimates about numbers, but family day care is thought to be very uncommon.

However, some attempts are being made to encourage more and better family day care. In 1992 a project was started in Athens, initiated by the European Union's N.O.W (New Opportunities for Women) Programme and carried out by the Family and Child Care Centre with the support of the Greek government. The aims are to promote family day care as a new type of provision, to inform parents, to set standards for good quality, to train women who want to be fdcs about how to create a warm and stimulating environment for young children and to ensure that fdcs get recognition for their work, with good conditions of employment and training opportunities. The project was open to women between 25 and 45 years with 12 years of school education and a suitable home. They attended a training course lasting for 12 weeks, which included issues like child development, early childhood issues, health care and music and rhythm.

There are plans to establish similar training courses in other parts of Greece and that women who have attended courses should get some kind of recognition.

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## IRELAND

The compulsory school age is 6 years, although many 4 years old and virtually all 5 year olds attend primary school on a voluntary basis. Otherwise there is little publicly funded provision for children under 6 years, apart from a small amount for disadvantaged children (covering about 2% of children under 6 years) subsidised by health boards. Otherwise, there are some private nurseries for children under 6 years and private *playgroups* which mainly



take children from 2.5 to 4 years for a few hours a week and depend on parent fees. There is no entitlement to any form of Parental Leave.

Family day care is not currently regulated. However, when a new law, the 1991 Child Care Act, is fully implemented, some fdcs - those taking more than 3 children under 6 years (excluding their own children) - will be registered and supervised by their local authority. All fdcs are self-employed, dealing directly with parents. There is no information about numbers, but family day care is thought to be an important source of child care; a recent official report concludes that "*it is probable that this form of daycare is a large, if not the largest, sector of childcare provision*".

There are no unions or organisations for fdcs and little in the way of training and support. However, the European Union's N.O.W. (New Opportunities for Women) Programme funds two projects in Ireland which include family day care training. One is in the Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University College Dublin. This is a 'Training of Trainers' project where 10 women from different regions of the country have taken part in a mixed residential and distance learning programme. These women (each an employee of a voluntary or private organisation) are now delivering an introductory training course in their own areas to groups of 8 to 10 women, and the project will result in over 200 women throughout the country receiving an introductory course in family day care.

A second project in a Dublin suburb includes training in family day care for a group of local women. It is expected that these two projects will have a noticeable effect on the situation of family day care in Ireland.

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**ITALY**

The compulsory school age is 6 years. Before then, over 90% of children aged 3 to 5 years attend nursery schooling, most for more than 7 hours a day. Services for children under 3 years include centre-based provision in nurseries. Parents are entitled to 9 months Parental Leave until children are 3 years old, to be divided between mother and father as they choose (with a low earnings-related payment).

Family day care is not regulated and all fdcs are self-employed, dealing directly with parents. There is no information about numbers, but family day care is thought to be uncommon; it is most likely to be found in and around some of the bigger towns of Northern Italy.

There are no unions or organisations for fdcs and little in the way of training or support. In areas of Northern and Central Italy, new types of services are being developed to provide support for home-based carers and their children, and these are available to any local fdcs. In Milan mothers and others caring for children can meet in informal ways at a centre called *Tempo per le Famiglia*, where they can discuss problems with the staff of social workers and psycho-pedagogists; some fdcs come to this centre.

In Tyrol attempts are being made to set up family day care schemes, following the Austrian model with training and supervision for the fdcs.

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## LUXEMBOURG

### **National Context**

The compulsory school age is 4 years, and nearly all 4 and 5 year olds attend nursery schooling. There are also centre-based services providing for children from 0 to 3 years and also, sometimes, out-of-school care for children at school. There is no entitlement to any form of Parental Leave.

Two private welfare organisations have operated family day care schemes since 1979 and 1982; these involve agreements with fdcs, who remain self-employed. This work arose out of foster care work undertaken by the organisations. Family day care and foster care are still closely related, with subsidised family day care regarded as a means of supporting the return of fostered children to their own homes.

Apart from the relatively small number of fdcs involved in these schemes, fdcs are independent and self-employed.

### **The Contribution of Family Day Care**

There is no information on the number of fdcs, but a survey of parents with children under 7 years suggests that family day care provides for about 4% of children and is the most common form of non-parental care (excluding schools), with slightly more children in family day care than in centre-based services. However, only 280 children are placed in organised family day care schemes, considerably fewer than the number of children in publicly funded centres and far fewer than the number of children in private family day care.

## **Public Involvement**

### **Subsidising costs**

The Ministry of Family and Social Solidarity funds the two organised schemes, via the private organisations that run them. Parents make an income-related payment as a contribution to costs, but as low income parents have priority for places this contribution covers only a small part of the cost.

Parents using family day care can reduce the amount of their earnings on which they pay tax by the cost of this care, if they have proof of payment, or by LF 24,000 per child per year if they have no proof.

### **Regulations**

Private family day care is not regulated in any way by law.

### **Unions or Organisations**

There are no organisations or unions for fdcs.

### **Training and Support**

There is little in the way of support or training for fdcs. Those in the schemes run by the two private organisations are supervised by staff from these organisations, which includes social workers and psychologists; the staff also select the fdcs. When placing a child in family day care, these supervisors help to arrange an agreement between the fdc and parents. As yet, there is no training programme for fdcs in these schemes, as it has not been possible for the organisations to agree on a mutually acceptable programme.

### **Employment**

Most fdcs are paid by parents and deal directly with them. Fdcs in the schemes run by the two private organisations, as already noted, are treated as self-employed which means that they must pay their own social security costs. However, as these costs are almost as much as the income from taking 2 children, few carers are prepared to do this. The carers do not get any social benefits.

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## THE NETHERLANDS

### National Context

The compulsory school age is 5 years but nearly all 4 year olds attend primary school on a voluntary basis. There are some centre-based services providing for children from 0 to 4 years and also, sometimes, out-of-school care for children at school. In addition, there is an extensive system of *playgroups* which take 2 and 3 year olds for a few hours a week and depend heavily on parent fees. Each parent is entitled to 6 months unpaid and part-time Parental Leave.

Low levels of employment among mothers, combined with government policy that regarded child care as a private matter for parents, meant that there was little public child care up to the early 1980s. Since then, there has been a rapid increase in maternal employment - although the Netherlands still has a low level of maternal employment and most employed mothers work part-time - and an increase in child care services partly encouraged by a government programme (the Stimulative Measure on Child Care) begun in 1990 to support the development of these services.

Organised family day care is a relatively new type of provision. The first family day care centre was started in Amsterdam 20 years ago, to support lone parent families. In 1981 the family day care centre in Zoetermeer was started by parents needing child care; first social workers volunteered their help, then in 1983 the project began to be subsidised by local authorities. It has become a model for other centres throughout the Netherlands and is also the biggest.

Today, family day care is organised by private, subsidised agencies or centres run originally by parents looking for home-based child care (*Vraagouders*, literally 'asking parents') and fdc's. These agencies employ professional staff who recruit fdc's, provide some support and match them with parents. Generally, however, they do not employ fdc's, who operate as independent providers of child care; the only exceptions are a few centres which employ fdc's on an experimental basis. In 1993, 234 family day care agencies were operating.

The Stimulative Measure can be used to support centres organising family day care, but not to make payments to fdc's.

### The Contribution of Family Day Care

The amount of family day care varies, since it is regarded as something 'new' and is less well known than centre-based provision. Areas like Zoetermeer with well-established family

day care centres and a good reputation can find suitable fdcs more readily than 'new' areas where projects are being established. Overall, family day care provides for fewer children than centre-based provision; in 1993, only 12% of places for children under 4 years were in family day care. Family day care is most common for children under 4 years; in 1993, two-thirds of children in family day care were under 4 years old. But fdcs also provide out-of-school care for some children.

### **Public Involvement**

#### **Subsidising costs**

The only public funding is for agencies organising family day care; this is mostly to pay the staff of these agencies. Funding for this purpose is available as part of the Stimulative Measure, but this is only planned to continue until 1996.

The national government encourages employers to subsidise child care for their employees. In 1992, 13% of all day care was subsidised in this way.

#### **Regulations**

Family day care is not regulated nationally. Local authorities can give a licence including recommendations to centres organising family day care.

### **Unions or Organisations**

There are no organisations or unions for fdcs.

The national employers' organisation for the subsidised social sector (*Vereniging van Ondernemingen in de Gepremieerde en Gesubsidieerde Sector - VOG*) works for all employers in social care and welfare. It has a special branch for child care, including family day care agencies.

### **Training and Support**

No formal training is required before employment. The individual family day care centres organise their own training courses, which leads to great differences in the training available for fdcs. Some centres offer some kind of introductory course for both fdcs and parents wanting to use family day care; as much attention is paid to parents as fdcs because of the emphasis placed on successful matching. The centre in Zoetermeer, for example, offers an introduction consisting of 3 evenings.

Some centres offer in-service training, and some pay fdcs if they attend a training course. In Zoetermeer, 9 different topics are offered: children's books, handicraft, safety, children

and television, indoor play, the settling-in period, sharing your mother (about the children of the family day carer), active parenthood and music for small children. These training courses are primarily for fdcs but parents can participate. However, in-service training is not compulsory and many fdcs do not follow any training.

The support given to fdcs varies a good deal depending on what resources the individual centre has. The centre at Zoetermeer employs 2 social pedagogues who can support the supervisors, the fdcs and the parents when needed. Two hundred and fifty fdcs are attached to the centre, though not all are caring for children at any one time. The supervisors make home visits once or twice a year and call each fdc on the phone at least once every second month.

In some projects, the fdcs meet once a month in self-help groups in each others' homes. Within these groups they arrange a system of substitutes in case a fdc is ill or on holiday.

### **Employment**

Parents either pay fdcs direct or, in a few cases, pay the agencies.

Fdcs are seen as semi-volunteers, and not as self-employed; they are not part of the social security system and are not entitled to any social benefits. This is due partly to the generally low status of caring for children and partly to the lack of a professional attitude in family day care; for example, a few agencies have tried to employ fdcs, but most prefer not to be employed as they do not see their work as a proper job. But it is also due partly to the tax system. The Netherlands has a joint taxation system, where the income of the wife is added to that of the husband; as only a small amount of income is allowed tax-free, many fdcs do not want to earn more than this amount which would mean they would pay taxes and risk the possibility of a relatively high rate of tax on the family's total income.

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## **NORWAY**

### **National Context**

The compulsory school age is 7 years. For younger children, there is centre-based provision in kindergartens. These centres provide for children from 0 to 6 years, but there are far fewer places for children under 3 years than over. Hours of opening vary; just over half of kindergartens are open for less than 30 hours a week. Parents are entitled to 52 weeks of Parental Leave, most of which can be divided between mother and father as they choose

(with a high earnings-related payment).

Legislation in 1975 introduced the concept of organised family day care schemes - or family day care centres - but growth was slow; in 1979 fewer than 1,000 children were in such schemes. In 1993, the government proposed new rules for the funding of organised family day care schemes, in order to stimulate their expansion.

Nowadays there are two main forms of family day care. Some care is provided in organised schemes by fdcs employed either by local authorities or by private organisations which account for a third of all centres. More common are independent, self-employed fdcs, who are neither regulated nor publicly funded.

### **The Contribution of Family Day Care**

Organised family day care is most commonly used for children under 3 years; nationally, 62% of children in this type of provision are 3 years of age or younger. However the proportion varies; in Oslo almost all children in organised family day care are under 3 years, whereas in some rural areas more children are over 3 than under 3. School children can be placed in fdc, but this is uncommon.

Norway differs from other Nordic countries because organised family day care plays only a small part in the provision of publicly funded child care services, which is dominated by centre-based services. Although the number of places in organised schemes has almost trebled since 1988, this type of provision still accounts for only 4% of all public provision, with 1,644 fdcs caring for 7,000 children in October 1993.

No statistics are available on private, independent fdcs.

### **Public Involvement**

#### **Subsidising costs**

Organised family day care schemes or centres receive funding from central government, covering 35% of costs, and local authorities, covering 29% of costs for centres run by local authorities and 14% for centres run by private organisations. The remaining costs are mainly met by parental payments, although employers and organisations may also contribute in some cases.

#### **Regulations**

Private fdcs are not regulated. For organised family day care, however, the Ministry of the Child and Family sends out regulations to local authorities who are responsible for inspection

and supervision. Local authorities have a high degree of autonomy, so that child care provision can differ a good deal depending on local decisions.

Legislation requires all funded family day care centres to have a constitution, a board and a council of parents. Each centre must have a leader who is a trained pre-school teacher. The maximum number of children that a fdc is permitted to care for is 5, including her own.

It is possible for 2 fdc's to work with 8 to 10 children in the home of one of the fdc's or in hired accommodation. A fdc can look after a child in the child's own home, together with other children; the parents who offer their home for this type of arrangement are compensated for the costs involved.

### **Unions or Organisations**

Fdc's employed by local authorities or private organisations in organised schemes can join the Union for Municipal Workers or the Norwegian Confederation of Municipal Employees. There is no information on how many have joined a trade union, but probably it is not very high. Most leaders of family day care centres are members of the Norwegian Union of Teachers.

### **Training and Support**

No formal training is required before employment and there are no requirements or recommendations for in-service training. But leaders of family day care centres can use some of their time for individual or group supervision and training, while centres can cooperate in providing in-service training.

For some years it has been possible for fdc's to obtain funding to study to become a pre-school teacher. There has been a lot of interest, but since 1993 this possibility is no longer available.

The leader of an organised scheme or centre is responsible for up to 30 children, including the fdc's' own children. This means 6-8 homes, though the number is reduced if children are under 3 years.

Each family day care centre must have premises where fdc's can meet regularly during the daytime. These are often special rooms in centre-based services or they can be in the home of one of the fdc's. It is recommended that fdc's visit kindergartens regularly to get inspiration for their work. A kindergarten can even have 1 or more fdc's attached to it, who are then the responsibility of the leader of the kindergarten.



## **Employment**

Fdcs in organised schemes are paid and employed by the local authority or organisation responsible for the family day care centre. They are paid by their employers on the basis of negotiations with the trade unions. Five children give a full-time wage, unless 1 child is younger than 3 years when the fdc only needs 4 children to obtain full pay; 3 children give 75% of a full-time wage and 2 children give 50%. The fdc also gets a tax-free allowance for costs. Their earnings are slightly below those of staff in kindergartens.

The normal working hours in Norway are 7.75 hours a day. Fdcs employed in an organised scheme work at most 8.25 hours. The extra half an hour worked by fdcs is regarded as over-time, and can be taken as leave when suitable. If parents need longer care, either a substitute fdc must take over, or the parents must find a private solution.

Fdcs have the same social benefits as other workers with respect to paid holidays and sick leave and pensions.

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## **PORTUGAL**

### **National Context**

The compulsory school age is 6 years. For children aged 3 to 5 years old, there are two systems of centre-based provision: nursery education within the school system, and kindergartens within the welfare system and which are open for longer hours and throughout the year. For children under 3 years, there is centre-based provision in nurseries, many of which are linked to kindergartens. Parents are entitled to up to 24 months of unpaid Parental Leave, which can be divided between mother and father as they choose.

There is a long tradition of private, independent family day care in Portugal. It was only in the early 1980s that two organised family day care schemes were started under the supervision of local welfare departments. The first law covering organised family day care (*creche familiar*) was introduced in 1984, establishing general principles about approving fdcs, the obligations of support systems and financial support. Further regulations in 1985 provided more specific details, for example about the recruitment and selection of fdcs, the admission of children, the salary of fdcs and payments by parents.

Nowadays there are two main forms of family day care. Most is provided by self-employed, independent fdcs. The rest is provided by self-employed fdcs in organised schemes run either

by a public authority or by a publicly funded private, non-profit organisation

### **The Contribution of Family Day Care**

By law, organised family day care schemes can be used only for children under 3 years. Presently publicly funded services provide for about 9% of children in this age group; 2,8% are covered by organised family day care schemes.

The number of children in private family day care is unknown.

### **Public Involvement**

#### **Subsidising costs**

Organised family day care schemes are subsidised by public authorities, either directly or through funding given to private, non-profit organisations running schemes. Parents make an income-related payment to the agency running the scheme, as a contribution to costs.

#### **Regulations**

Private family day care is not regulated. By contrast, detailed regulations exist for organised family day care schemes. Fdcs in these schemes may take up to 4 children, including her own.

### **Unions or Organisations**

A private organisation has recently been established by fdcs.

### **Training and Support**

There is little in the way of training or support for independent fdcs. In organised schemes, the agency running the scheme is responsible for the selection and training of fdcs. By law, all fdcs on an organised scheme get a training period, which lasts from 4 to 8 weeks; this includes meetings, discussions and field work. After a probation period of no more than 5 months the work of the new fdc is evaluated; if the evaluation is positive, she receives her licence and a contract.

A scheme consists of 12-24 fdcs and is attached either to a welfare agency or to a public service, preferably a nursery. Each scheme should have at least 2 supervisors who pay home visits, give in-service training and supply necessary equipment. The supervisors, who are usually trained for work in centre-based services such as nursery schools or kindergartens, visit the fdcs regularly and help them establish good relationships with the parents.

### **Employment**

Fdcs in organised schemes are regarded as self-employed, although their salary is determined and paid by the agency running the scheme; their payment includes a tax-free amount to cover meals. Fdcs are covered by the social security regime for self-employed workers. If they choose the compulsory scheme they are only entitled to maternity/paternity/ adoption benefits and old age/disablement/death benefits; if they choose the extended scheme they are entitled to other benefits, including sickness. However, they are entitled to 4 weeks leave per year and their payment each month includes an amount intended to cover holidays.

Independent, self-employed fdcs negotiate payment directly with parents and operate outside the social security system.

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## SPAIN

The compulsory school age is 6 years. Before then, nearly all 4 and 5 year olds and an increasing proportion of 3 year olds attend nursery schooling. Services for children under 3 include centre-based provision in nurseries, and there are some centres which take children from 0 to 6 years. Parents are entitled to up to 12 months of unpaid Parental Leave, which can be divided between mother and father as they choose.

Family day care is thought to be very uncommon in Spain, and is not regulated.

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## SWEDEN

### National Context

The compulsory school age is 7 years, but children may start when they are 6. For younger children there is an extensive system of publicly-funded services including provision in centres which take children from 1 to 6 years and are usually open for 10-12 hours a day; in 'part-time groups' (*deltidsgrupper*) for 4 to 6 year olds, which children usually attend for 3 hours a day; and in 'open pre-schools' (*öppen forskola*), which children attend a few times a week usually in the company of a parent or fdc. Parents are entitled to up to 15 months of Parental Leave, which can be divided between mother and father as they choose (mostly with a high earnings-related payment).

Local authorities in the bigger cities first started taking an interest in family day care in the

late 1940s. In 1967, state funding for local authorities running organised family day care was introduced. One condition was that the fdcs were employed according to a national agreement made with a trade union. In 1988 the National Board on Health and Welfare published their General Advice, suggesting how to develop family day care, and each year money is given to developmental projects all over the country.

Almost all fdcs are employed by their local authorities, but recently it has become possible for self-employed fdcs to get public funding if they set up their own business. It is up to each local authority to decide whether to permit this arrangement and, if so, under what conditions. So far, only a few fdcs have set up their own business, but there is growing interest in this as many local authorities are cutting down on the number of fdcs they employ.

There are also a number of independent, self-employed fdcs.

### **The Contribution of Family Day Care**

Until recently, about a third of children in organised family day care were of school age; fdcs provided care outside school hours. From January 1992, however, many local authorities have made the school system responsible for school-age child care. Most provision is now made in schools or centres, reducing the number of school children using family day care.

The same trend is apparent for younger children. In 1980, family day care made up 43% of publicly funded provision for children under 7 years; but by 1994 its contribution had fallen to 24%. A continuing decrease is expected in the numbers of children in family day care.

### **Public Involvement**

#### **Subsidising costs**

In general, the costs of organised family day care have been divided between the state, the local authorities and the parents so that the state paid 50% of the costs, the local authorities 35% and the parents 15%. From 1993 the whole system of funding has been changed. Now the local authorities receive a lump sum for all costs to use as they want, with no money especially marked for family day care (or any other services for young children) and with no conditions. In most communes, the parents' payment is income-related and a contribution to general costs.

#### **Regulations**

Private family day care is not regulated. Organised family day care is part of the public child care schemes which are regulated in the Social Services Act from 1980 and in the Child Care

Act from 1994. There are few national regulations for organised family day care, but the National Board of Health and Welfare makes recommendations, including that there should be a maximum of 4 full-time children, including the children of the fdc. The local authorities are responsible for this type of family day care and make their own regulations and qualifications.

### **Unions or Organisations**

Fdcs employed by local authorities in organised schemes are members of the Swedish Public Workers Union (*Svenska kommunalarbetsförbundet*); they belong to the section which also includes nursery assistants working in centre-based services. There is a high level of union membership, around 80-90%. The union negotiates centrally with the organisation of local authorities to reach a national agreement; this is a minimum agreement, with possibilities for supplementation through local agreements.

### **Training and Support**

No formal training is required of fdcs but the National Board of Health and Welfare recommends that all fdcs in organised schemes should receive the same basic training as nursery assistants; this training is 40 weeks. Many local authorities have or have had a special initial training course of 100 hours for their fdcs. The training includes children's development, pedagogic and practical work with children, nutrition and children's safety. In 1993, two-thirds of fdcs of all fdcs either had the initial 100-hours training (42%) or the 40 weeks training as a nursery assistant (24%); a further 6% had some kind of child-related higher education (e.g. as a teacher).

The National Board of Health and Welfare also recommends that all workers in services for young children should receive 30 hours of in-service training a year. Not all local authorities fulfil this recommendation, and fdcs, in general, receive less in-service training than other groups of child care workers. In-service training is most often conducted during day-time, with full payment for the fdcs.

Fdcs in organised schemes must have supervisors, whose job is to organise and support the work and guarantee the quality; there is, however, no national regulation nor recommendations about the number of fdcs for which each supervisor should be responsible. During the last few years new ways are being found to give fdcs supervision and support. In some areas they are being attached to a local centre, and the leader of the centre then supervises them.

In the 1970s it was suggested that local authorities should establish 'open pre-schools',

supplying support and a meeting centre for parents and children who were not in centres, and also for fdcs. Often trained staff are employed to work in these 'open pre-schools', and many 'open pre-schools' have toy-libraries where the fdcs can borrow toys. This service gives fdcs an important meeting place, and has played an important role in the development of family day care.

Even where an 'open pre-school' is not available, fdcs meet together in groups, generally once a week. Most groups have access to a meeting-place, most often in the premises of other kinds of services for young children.

### **Employment**

All fdcs in organised schemes have, until now, been paid and employed by local authorities. The national agreement, negotiated by the trade union, gives fdcs a monthly salary, with full pay based on 3 full-time children and 1 part-time child or 7 part-time children; full salary is also based on a 55 hour week, with extra hours eligible for overtime payment. Actual payment is based on the number of children cared for and the number of hours they are cared for, which means that the actual salary can vary. The salary of fdcs in organised schemes is the same as for untrained workers in centres, although fdcs work longer hours. They also receive a tax-free allowance for food and other expenses.

Fdcs in organised schemes have the same social benefits as other workers, including a right to 5 weeks paid holiday, 80% of payment in case of illness and a pension.

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## **UNITED KINGDOM**

### **National Context**

The United Kingdom consists of four nations: England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Scotland has a separate legal system, and there are some differences in law in Northern Ireland.

The compulsory school age is 5 years and many 4 year olds attend primary school on a voluntary basis; there is also some nursery education for 3 and 4 year olds, which most children attend on a part-time basis. There are some centre-based services providing for children under 5 years, mostly provided in private, for-profit centres. In addition, there is an extensive system of *playgroups* which take 2 to 4 year olds for a few hours a week and depend heavily on parent fees. There is no entitlement to any form of Parental Leave;

Maternity Leave, however, can be taken by mothers until 29 weeks after the birth, although most of the leave period is unpaid.

Family day care has existed for a long time, but was not regulated by law until 1948. Most recently, the law covering fdc's was revised in the 1989 Children Act and the system of regulation improved.

The great majority of fdc's are self-employed and independent, with an unknown number operating illegally. A relatively small number of self-employed fdc's have children placed with them and paid for by local authorities, and a further small number are employed by local authorities.

### **The Contribution of Family Day Care**

The majority of children in family day care are below 5 years, but some older children also use family day care as a form of school-age childcare. A national survey conducted in 1990 found that 6% of children under 5 years but only 3% of 5 to 7 year olds used an approved fdc.

In 1993, there were nearly 100,000 approved fdc's in England, Scotland and Wales, providing around 330,000 places for children under the age of 8 years; this was more than twice the number of places available in nurseries, public and private, although nurseries only take children under 5 years. The 1990 survey however showed that more children were cared for by friends or neighbours (7% of children under 5 years) and far more by relatives (29%) than by fdc's (6%). The numbers of school-age children in family day care is likely to expand significantly over the next couple of years in response to government initiatives.

### **Public Involvement**

#### **Subsidising costs**

Most family day care is a business, contractual arrangement between fdc's and parents. The only subsidising of cost is where local authorities use fdc's for children considered to be 'in need' (ie. children with disabilities or whose health or development is considered to be at risk), in which case the local authority pays the fdc.

Because of a shortage of provision, some employers have worked with the *National Childminding Association* (NCMA) to set up family day care networks. Fdc's in these networks receive close monitoring by network co-ordinators and training to promote high quality care.

## **Regulations**

All fdc's caring for children up to the age of 8 years for more than 2 hours in one day and for payment must be approved by their local authority; to do this, the local authority must be satisfied that the fdc is a 'fit person' to care for children. New fdc's must be registered before they can take children, and are then subject to an annual inspection. Fdc's must pay a fee to the local authority both to apply for registration and for annual inspection. A fdc is allowed to care for a maximum of 3 children under 5 years, or 6 children between the ages of 5 and 7 years, her own children included. A fdc can employ an assistant and take extra children, with the same ratios applying for these additional children.

In addition to setting an upper limit on the number of children to be cared for, local authorities have powers to impose such other requirements as they consider reasonable. Many (although not all) authorities require fdc's to have public liability insurance; some require that the fdc signs a declaration concerning equal opportunities and/or physical punishment (this has recently been challenged in the courts); some require attendance at a course of preparation training.

## **Unions or Organisations**

In the early 1970s several local studies, mainly in urban areas, contributed to an image of family day care as a poor quality service. After a series of television programmes aimed at fdc's, a group of fdc's, parents and local authority workers started the NCMA, with the aim of promoting family day care. With a membership of fdc's (both individuals and local groups), parents and local authority workers, NCMA soon became an important influence in the development of family day care.

Nowadays, NCMA has about 55,000 members, equivalent to about half of all registered fdc's in England and Wales. It has an executive committee made up of working fdc's and employs staff at its head office and in regional and local offices. Separate associations for fdc's have been established in Northern Ireland and Scotland, and Wales may follow in due course. All associations work to improve the situation of fdc's and the quality of care. They also offer advice on all questions concerning family day care and specific services such as insurance.

## **Training and Support**

In general no formal training is required before approval by the local authority, although some authorities do require attendance at a short, initial course. The NCMA plays an important role in training, both nationally and locally. In 1993, the NCMA produced a training pack for use by tutors, with financial assistance from the Government; it contains



suggestions for briefing sessions, a preparation course, follow-on courses and in-service training. The briefing session is for applicants wanting to register as fdcs; it is suggested that this should be spread over 2 meetings. The preparation course is for newly registered fdcs and should be available during or shortly after registration; it should run over 10 sessions and includes cooperating with parents, children's needs and behaviour, equal opportunities, safety and the business side. The follow-up course is for fdcs who have already had the preparation course; it is also divided into 10 sessions and focuses on working with children of different ages, equal opportunities and the professional approach. The in-service training is for fdcs who have worked for a period of time without any specific training; this training is similar to the other courses but takes into account the knowledge gained from experience.

It is also possible now for fdcs to gain a new form of qualification, the *National Vocational Qualifications in Child Care and Education* (NVQs). The NVQs are based on demonstrating competence in different aspects of work with young children, rather than taking a course and passing an examination at the end; it does not depend therefore on following any particular type of study. The standards to be met are defined nationally, and the system covers workers in all services for young children.

Local authorities can choose to offer support to fdcs, but are not required to do so. This support can take a variety of forms, for instance training or equipment/toy loan schemes. There is considerable variety between local authorities in how much support they provide and also in the number of regulatory officers they employ to register and inspect fdcs.

An important source of support are local self-help groups, now found all over the country, where fdcs can meet and support each other. NCMA is developing a network of local development officers who provide support to fdcs, organise training and promote family day care services. These development officers are often experienced fdcs. Their posts are funded by local authorities and are managed and supported Regional Development Officers employed by NCMA.

### **Employment**

Independent, self-employed fdcs, who account for nearly all family day care, are paid directly by parents and negotiate with them. They must also negotiate with parents for provisions to cover sickness or holidays and makes her own arrangements for insurance. Fdcs pay tax on their income, but can deduct expenses.

## ISSUES

### **Centre-based Care versus Family Day Care**

What is best for the child - to be cared for at home, in a centre or in family day care? This question often comes up and can lead to lively discussions.

Researchers do not give much help. Most of the research comes from the United States, and it is not safe to generalise results from the context of the United States to the context of individual European countries; conditions differ too much. The lack of statistical and research information in many countries makes it difficult if not impossible to know who cares for children while their parents work and in what conditions children are cared for.

Hans van Crombrugge (1990) from the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium has made a review of comparative research on the effects on young children of home care, family day care and centre-based care. This shows that the results of research vary, and that they are sometimes contradictory. In general, it seems that centre-based care stimulates intellectual growth more than family day care, but that the emotional development and the health of the children are better in family day care.

In Sweden a longitudinal study has been conducted which has followed a group of children for 10 years or more, in order to see how going to different types of provision affect them (Andersson & Gunnarsson, 1990). The results suggest that children who received early care (in their first year) in either family day care or centre-based care seem to develop intellectually better than children who have been cared for in their home.

A longitudinal study in the United Kingdom, which also followed children who received non-parental care from an early age concluded that, at the age of 3 years, children who had used family day care had developed at a comparable rate to children in other types of care or those cared for by a parent at home (Hennessy et al., 1992).

Probably the only general conclusions are that neither centre-based care nor family day care is harmful for a child if the provision is of good quality and offers a chance to establish stable relationships with the carer or carers.

Family day care and centre-based care, however, may offer children different types of

experience, because of their inherent differences. Much will depend on which type of experience parents value most for their children. Even on this question of what parents value and want for their children, and how satisfied parents are with family day care, we have relatively little European research.

In Finland a national study was carried out, funded by the Finnish National Board of Social Welfare, in order to improve the quality of the system of services for young children (Huttunen & Tamminen, 1989). In the study a national sample of parents with children in either centre-based care or family day care evaluated different aspects of the service their children attended, such as guided activities and play, children's free play, basic care (eating, sleeping, etc.), rules and individual treatment of the child. In general the results show that parents are very satisfied: but parents with children in centre care were more satisfied with the guided activities, whereas parents with children in family day care were more satisfied with all the other aspects. The authors conclude as follows:

*The factors behind parents' satisfaction show that these two types of day care, the day care centre and family day care, are clearly viewed as different in nature. The views both of parents and of day care personnel regarding the importance of educational aims demonstrate clearly that there are different expectations and objectives set for education in a centre and in family day care (p. 21).*

A study has been conducted in Hamburg comparing the views of fdcs and mothers with children in family day care (Krauss & Zauter, 1993). Two out of three mothers were very or rather satisfied with the care. Most important for the satisfaction of the mothers was that the child adapted well, liked the fdc and was happy to go to her. Among the factors that influence a negative view of fdc by mothers was lack of centre care, in other words when family day care was not the preferred type of care but the only one available.

A study in the United Kingdom, concerned primarily with the impact of training on family day care, included interviews with mothers and fdcs (Ferri, 1992). Two-thirds of the mothers were satisfied with the care given. The study gives many interesting insights into the relationship between mothers and fdcs, which the author describes as "*intricate and sensitive*":

*For childminders and parents, the complexity lies partly in the conflicting components of a relationship which requires the formality associated with financial and contractual exchanges, and, at the same time, the personal, intimate rapport deemed essential in caring for a child (p. 142).*

In Denmark a large postal survey was carried out with a national sample of parents with children in family day care, as well as to fdc's employed by their local authorities (Bertelsen, 1992). The result shows that almost all the parents felt that family day care is the best care for children under 3 years of age (92%), but that centres are better for older children (90%). The parents were very satisfied with the situation in the family day care home of their child. More than 90% were positive towards the fdc and felt that she worked hard; 80-90% thought that the family day care home was satisfactorily equipped, that the children were getting sufficient outdoors activities and that, normally, the parents were well informed about what went on during the day. Between 70-80% thought that the children had enough activities during the day and felt no lack of pedagogical knowledge from the fdc's. But a fifth of the parents had experienced a problem sufficiently serious to require help from the supervisor of the organised scheme, and a fifth had also had difficulties when the fdc was ill.

There was a high level of agreement between fdc's and parents about what is important for children. The highest priority was placed on socialising the children. Possibilities for children to choose their own activities were also stressed. As for contact between parents and carer, the parents found it easier to communicate than the fdc's. What the fdc's found especially difficult to discuss, and where opinions most differed, concerned parents keeping to the agreed times for picking up children, and how to react when children misbehaved.

In Sweden many small surveys have been conducted in different local authorities, asking parents with children in public services how they feel about the various types of provision. All surveys show similar results. Almost all parents are very satisfied, but those with children in family day care are somewhat more satisfied than others, especially as to the relationship between child and carer and the possibilities for the parents to influence the care of the child. In general, parents using family day care seem to explain their satisfaction in terms of their good fortune at having found such a marvellous carer, whereas parents using centres say that centre-based care is good for children.

In a recent survey, parents in Stockholm wanting family day care were interviewed (Karlsson, 1994). The supply of services for young children exceeds the demands, indicating that parents using family day care can do so as a positive choice. Many of these parents had personal experience of centre care, and had rejected it for their own children. These parents especially stressed the importance of a small group of children being with one carer, who can give individual attention to each child and who lets the children join her in the everyday work in a home without over-stimulating the children. The majority of these parents would also have preferred to stay at home with their children rather longer if possible: but, as it was not possible, they found family day care to be the best solution.

Although the number of surveys of parents are rather few, there appears to be an interesting tendency for a higher percentage of parents to be very satisfied with family day care in countries with a high supply of both family day care and centre care. In such situations, parents can really choose which type of care they want for their children, so are less likely to have to accept a type of provision they view as second best. Moreover in these countries, fdc's are generally employed by local authorities and support systems are available for both fdc's and parents.

The surveys also point to parents having different preferences, especially for children under 3 years; some value and want centre-based care, others family day care. In Sweden and other countries, research indicates that working-class families are more likely to choose family day care (or other types of individual care, for example by relatives) for their children, while middle-class parents are more likely to prefer centre care. This seems to reflect differences in values and leads to what the Swedish researcher Sven Persson calls the political paradox: that working class parents, who mainly vote Social Democrat, prefer staying at home with their children, which is what the conservative parties advocate; while middle-class parents, who are more likely to vote for right wing parties, prefer centres, which is more in line with the policy of left wing parties.

This political observation reminds us that powerful ideologies underlie some of the discussions about the relative merits of centre-based care and family day care. June Pollard (1993), a Canadian researcher, has studied family day care in many countries with a special interest in how different political ideologies affect attitudes to non-parental care in general and to family day care in particular.

The different attitudes concentrate around two opposite poles, characterised on one side by libertarian/free enterprise/traditional family views, which can be labelled the 'conservative/liberal perspective'; on the other side is the 'socialist perspective' reflected in egalitarian/social democratic/interdependent views.

The conservative perspective emphasizes the right of self-determination for the individual and the limited influence of public authorities. It values pluralism with many alternative possibilities. Market forces should be dominant, with expenses carried by consumers; voluntary organisations should play an important part. Parents should be fully responsible for their children. In this perspective, child care is mainly the responsibility of the parents. Publicly funded provision should only be supplied to families in need. Mothers should preferably care for their children themselves. If this is not possible, then family day care is the best solution; it can even be seen as part of a local network that can be disrupted if

regulated by the authorities. Centre-based care is regarded as a devastating form of institutionalization, especially for young children.

The socialist perspective emphasises in particular a public responsibility for all children. Because of this the authorities, local or national, should supply services and subsidise the costs in order to make childcare available for all who need it.

Services for young children can also be viewed from two different perspectives. They can be a means for women to join the labour market, enabling equality of opportunity between men and women; or they can be a way of changing society through bringing up children collectively. From the former perspective, family day care becomes a cost-effective form of service, as it is normally cheaper to establish than centres. As centres become more widespread, family day care can exist as a small, highly specialised form of child care, for example for children with special needs, or it can even be seen as a part of a whole system, providing a real choice for the parents but in that case with a strong involvement from the authorities. If services for young children are seen as a way to change society, family day care has no part to play. Instead it is seen as exploitation of women who are forced to maintain their traditional role.

This analysis gives an interesting explanation for the enormous differences in the development of family day care in different countries. Few countries have totally followed one course of development: but overall tendencies can be recognized. It also provides a way of understanding why so few countries have invested heavily in family day care. In many countries, there has been a conflict between those who want mothers to care full-time for children and those who aspire to centre-based care for all; neither side values or supports the idea of a properly resourced family day care service, even though family day care has often been around for a long time and provides for many children.

### **Freedom or Security**

At the IFDCO conferences in Belgium and Sweden, there have been lively discussions about the employment situation of the fdc. Family day care can be organised in many different ways, and fdcs can have many different employment situations, each of which affects their freedom and security. For many people, the Nordic fdcs seem to have an ideal situation - employed by their local authorities with the same kind of social rights as other employees. But while they have a high degree of security, they also have to submit to a degree of control and regulation which can seem very unwelcome to many self-employed fdcs.

**Self-employed and independent fdcs** have a great amount of freedom. They are free to

choose which children they want to care for, and they can refuse families they do not like; they can decide how many children they want to accept, within the limits of the law; they can decide how many hours they want to work a day or a week, and what they want to charge. All this naturally depends on the supply and demand situation in their local neighbourhood. But the price of this freedom for self-employed fdc's is lack of security. They have to negotiate directly with the parents, and they risk being left without money if the parents do not pay. Many self-employed fdc's have experienced situations when parents have not been able to pay and had misgiving at having to tell parents not to leave their child again until they have paid - or else taking the child, knowing that the chance of getting paid is very little. The self-employed fdc might be able to make the parents pay when the child is absent, but again this can be a very difficult question. In order to obtain paid sick leave and holidays, or to secure a pension, the self-employed fdc must make her own arrangements. It is also up to her to provide insurance and all kinds of necessary equipment.

Registered or approved fdc's may get some help from their local authorities, but then they may also have to accept some kind of restrictions and inspection, losing some of their independence.

**Self-employed carers attached to some kind of centre** may be paid by that centre, which then also handles payments from the parents. This arrangement gives the fdc's some degree of financial security, but also means that the fdc cannot negotiate with the parents. For instance, an experienced and popular fdc cannot get a better payment than others. As the fdc's are seen as self-employed, or even as volunteers, they have no right to the social benefits of employees. The centres may give a high level of support, but the fdc's have to meet a series of requirements, for instance concerning training, supervision and what children to accept.

**Fdc's employed either by authorities or private organisations** have the same rights to social benefits as other employees, and they can choose to belong to a trade union that can negotiate for them. The fdc's have a right to sick leave, paid holidays, maternity leave and their salary is pensionable. The employer has some kind of responsibility to place new children if someone leaves, thus guaranteeing a certain level of income. In some countries, the fdc's receive an extra, tax-free sum for their expenses, and they are insured by their employer. There might even be provisions like toy libraries, and extra money for excursions. In return for all these benefits the fdc has little chance to refuse to take a particular child. She has to accept what working hours have been negotiated by the employer and the union, and she has to accept her employer's goals and ways of working.

In the discussions on freedom or security the question often arises - who gets freedom or

security? Freedom for the fdc might mean less security for the parents - and vice versa.

Parents using **self-employed** fdcs can be seen as buyers of services, totally dependent on market forces. This means that the balance between parents and fdcs depends on the supply/demand situation. If there is a surplus of fdcs, the parents can choose which they want and even set requirements regarding the care they expect. If there is a shortage of fdcs, the parents can be forced to accept almost anything offered in order to solve their acute need for child care. There is no guarantee that the fdc is suitable for the work, and if problems arise between parent and fdc, the only solution for the parents is to remove the child, and start looking for another.

With a totally private system, the parents pay all the costs, which depend on what they can negotiate with the fdc. Fees may vary considerably, depending on the balance between supply and demand; the system even gives well-educated, experienced fdcs a possibility to charge a higher price than others. The risk naturally is that parents with low incomes cannot afford a high quality fdc, but must leave their child with a less satisfactory fdc that other parents would not want for their children.

In countries where there is some kind of regulation, local authorities often apply some conditions to fdcs that they register. This even gives parents a chance to complain if they are not happy with the care provided. But ultimately, they are still dependant on the supply of care available and what they can afford to pay.

Using **fdcs attached to a centre** or an **employed fdc** gives parents another kind of security. The fdcs will have some kind of supervisor, who will help in matching each child to an appropriate fdc and, hopefully, provide some guarantee of the quality of care. If problems should arise, it is possible to get help to sort things out, without removing the child.

In these kinds of family day care there is usually some kind of public funding. The parents pay according to their income, while the carers are paid by their organisation or local authority according to agreed rates. This makes it possible for all parents to get the same kind of care no matter what they earn, and for all children to get care of a good standard. On the other hand the parents might not have much influence on which fdc they get for their children, but only get a few suggestions from their local authority. An initiative to give parents more influence has been introduced in Denmark, through the recent legislation enabling the establishment of parent boards for organised family day care schemes.

Where publicly funded fdc is only available for families defined by a social work agency as



'in need', the parents have few rights. If the service is given as a social work measure, the parents can experience it as a way of controlling them, almost as a threat, and the fdc can be seen as an extension of the authorities, checking on the life of the parents.

### **Professionalism in Family Day Care - Is It Possible?**

In many countries there is a discussion about whether a fdc should see herself as a professional or not. Can - and should - the work in family day care be regarded and valued as much as the work in centres?

The argument **against** is that anyone can become a fdc: there are no special demands for training or standards of quality involved. Others argue that a professional fdc might lose her 'genuine motherly feelings' and some of her flexibility. The argument **for** professionalisation is the need for recognition of the importance of the work done by fdc's (the Council Recommendation on Child Care refers to '*the importance and social and educative value*' of work with young children), the necessity of setting up some minimum standards and the fdc's wish to receive social rights in the labour market.

Most organisations and authorities working for family day care advocate professionalisation. The *National Childminding Association* in England has for instance produced a training package, with one part called: *Childminding - it's a proper job!*. The Ministry of Social Affairs in France has produced a brochure called: *Assistantes & assistents maternels - un métier*. While in Sweden, the National Board of Social Affairs has edited a training booklet called: *Dagbarnvårdare - ett yrke*. In all three countries, therefore, the almost identical title has been used, to underline the attitude that being a fdc is a job, which requires something more than looking after your own children.

Naturally, professionalisation of family day care demands training and support, and appropriate pay and conditions, all of which costs money. It can be very convenient, at least from some perspectives, to keep the poor working conditions, lack of social benefits and bad pay that characterises the employment of most fdc's in Europe today. This way a large group of women - as almost all fdc's are - supply society with an important service for a very low cost. So the issue is a crucial test of equal rights in the labour market and the value attached to working with children.

Compared with parents who use family day care for their children, the fdc's have a very unequal position. Robert Theisen from Luxembourg describes the problem like this:

*It does not seem right that family day carers do not belong to the social security*

*system, as they, through their work, enable other parents to earn their salaries together with social benefits such as paid sick leave, paid holidays, insurance for unemployment etc. (personal communication)*

No matter how the job of the fdc is regarded, looking after the children of other people differs a great deal from looking after your own, and cooperating with parents requires much from fdc's. Therefore, training is very important. This has been realised in almost all countries, and training is increasingly offered. But the length and contents vary a lot: in some places training is compulsory, whereas in others it is entirely up to the fdc's to decide whether they want training or not.

There are some common issues about training. Fdc's have very varying backgrounds when they start the work. Levels of education differ; some fdc's will have experienced failure at school and may be reluctant to expose themselves again to what they may see as a school-like situation. Almost all fdc's have children of their own, but some have previously worked with children, for example in centres or schools. All this makes it difficult to find a suitable level of the training.

As fdc's work alone in their own homes, it is always difficult to find a good time for training courses. To receive training during daytime requires arrangements to provide care for fdc's' children and can be very difficult if the training runs over a long period of time. Most training for fdc's therefore is conducted in evenings, but this can be very hard for fdc's who have very long working days.

A problem with most training courses for fdc's is that they are not recognised in any other job. If the fdc wants to change employment, from working in her own home to working in a centre for instance, her training is of very little use. Many women start working as a fdc while their own children are young, in order to look after them and earn some money at the same time. At least to start with, many fdc's do not regard family day care as a permanent occupation - even if many continue in the work and later get a more professional view on their work. The fact that the training is not recognised for other occupations might make fdc's hesitate to follow it, if it is not compulsory.

Everybody needs feedback about his or her work and to discuss problems that arise. As fdc's work alone in their own homes, they need support and supervision from other sources to do a good job. Naturally the children they take and their parents are important in this respect; if the children are happy and the parents satisfied, the fdc can feel confident that her work is of good quality. Nevertheless, it is important to get professional feedback and supervision

when problems arise, which naturally happens for all sometimes. As mentioned earlier, most countries have some kind of control, coordination and/or supervision of fdcs - although the workload of supervisory and support workers varies considerably. The number of fdcs that each supervisory or support worker has responsibility for must naturally affect what amount and type of supervision and support such workers can give. In some countries it has become usual for the supervisor to meet the fdcs in a group, in order to see them more often; this can be a very good way of keeping contact, but can also mean that the fdcs have little chance to get individual attention.

According to a Swedish study most fdcs want support for issues concerning relationships with parents and problems that the children have - both of which can be difficult to discuss with the supervisor in groups with other fdcs present. The study also points out that fdcs who meet their supervisor less often feel less need for supervision, whereas fdcs who get frequent supervision demand more. In other words, supervision can make fdcs aware of their need for more supervision and support!

An interesting difference between the European countries is the education of the supervisors for family day care. In the Nordic countries, the supervisors have almost always trained to work with children in kindergartens or other centre-based services or else they have another child-oriented basic training. In Germany, Austria and the UK the supervisor most often is a trained social worker or has another similar social-orientated training; in Austria, this includes family therapists working as supervisors of fdcs. In Belgium, France and Portugal the supervisor often has a health background, training as a nurse.

These differences may be seen as indicators of the view taken of family day care, and of children's needs. In the Nordic countries, the supervisors will stress the development of the children, whereas social workers have a more family-oriented perspective, and nurses naturally are more concerned about health matters.

But what is most striking is that none of these different backgrounds give all the knowledge necessary to supervise fdcs. In no country is it considered necessary for supervisory and support staff to have actually worked as fdcs. This means that fdcs receive supervision and support from professional workers who may have no direct experience of the work! In this aspect, the job of the fdcs and their supervisors is alike - neither have real vocational training.

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## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Family day care exists throughout most of Europe, but the level of public involvement differs very much. The actual number of children in family day care is not known, as few countries have reliable statistics on who cares for children when their parents are at work. Family day care is most commonly used for children under 3, but many older children are cared for after school or kindergarten.

In many countries, parents using family day care have little opportunity to choose what kind of care they want for their young children, as publicly supported services are rarely sufficient. Many parents must depend on what private services they can find, and the quality of the care is related to what they can afford to pay.

There are a variety of employment statuses for fdcs, ranging from being self-employed and entirely independent, subject to no regulation, through to being the employee of a local authority or private organisation. In most countries the working conditions of fdcs are not satisfactory, whether judged against pay, working conditions, access to social benefits or opportunities for training and career development.

Three main principles underlie my conclusions and recommendations:

- \* The right of the child to good care;
- \* The right of the parents to decide what kind of care they want for their child
- \* The right of the family day carer to equal opportunities on the labour market and recognition of the importance and value of the work.

### **The Right of the Child**

All children should have the right to care of high quality, whether they are cared for at home or outside the home in a centre or with a fdc. High quality care implies that the child can build up a lasting relationship with her or his carer, that she or he has playmates, that her or his needs for secure and safe care are satisfied and that all children are treated equally irrespective of gender, race or religion.

These requirements can be met in family day care, as well as in centres. Indeed, arguments about family day care versus centre-based care are really quite pointless. **Both kinds of**

provision are needed and wanted, and both can and should be of high quality - even if they are rather different in nature and the experience they offer. What is important, though, is to establish family day care not because it is a cheap way of meeting a need for child care, but because it is a valuable option with its own inherent qualities.

Especially for young children, a close relationship with a few carers is important. Family day care can provide this, characterised as it is by one person caring for the child all day (although in well organised schemes, fdc's and their children have opportunities to meet with other adults and children on a regular basis). The group of children is quite small, which enables the fdc to give individual attention to each child and adjust her activities flexibly according to the special needs of her group of children. The care is given in a private home, which gives the children a chance to participate in normal, everyday life, and creates splendid opportunities for learning and playing at the same time. The family day care home can be situated quite close to the home of the child, and the fdc can become a part of the social network around the child and its family.

To develop these qualities, that are unique for family day care, naturally demands that the fdc's see themselves not as temporary 'mothers substitutes', but as a professional group, carrying out most important work.

### **The Right of the Parents**

It is always difficult for parents to leave a child in the care of someone else. It can also be difficult for parents to judge the quality of a service on offer. To be able to decide what kind of service they want, parents need some kind of quality guarantee from their local authorities.

All parents should have the right to choose what kind of care they want for their child, irrespective of their financial situation. They should be able to choose whether they want to care for their children themselves, whether they want centre-based care or family day care. Parents should also have the right to information about and insight into how the care is provided, and should have the right to be actively involved in discussing and determining what happens to their child whether in a centre or family day care.

### **The Right of the Carer**

Being responsible for other people's children demands much more of a carer than looking after her own; not everybody can cope with this job, just because they happen to have children of their own. Any worker with young children should have the right to get an adequate training before starting her job, and to receive continuous in-service training and

support. The fdc also needs access to various specialists who she can consult whenever she cares for a child with some kind of special needs.

Fdcs do an important job, providing a service for hundreds of thousands of young children and thereby enabling their parents to work outside their homes. Fdcs should naturally be treated with the same respect as all other workers in services for young children. They should have the same rights to good working conditions, and to all social rights that other workers have: paid holidays, maternity and parental leave, sick leave and pensions.

Fdcs who have worked for many years have gathered a valuable experience. It is a great waste not to acknowledge this and give them a chance to further develop their skills, if for some reason they choose to stop working as fdcs. Fdcs should have the opportunity to follow another career, if they want, and have their experience and training recognised in other jobs.

### **Recommendations**

In order to guarantee high quality in family day care, the following recommendations are made:

- 1) Before a fdc is approved and registered, she should meet certain **requirements**, for example with respect to age, experience of working with other people's children, training, understanding of equal opportunities, ability to work with others, health, home environment, equipment etc.
- 2) **Training** should be required of all fdcs. It should be possible to develop a common, basic training for all who want to work with children, no matter in what kind of service, with some possibility to specialise. Naturally, working in centres demands skills in managing a larger group of children, whereas working in family day care demands some other skills appropriate to the particular features of this type of service. With a common, basic training, workers could easily change from working in one field to another, and could go on to further training with their basic training recognised. In-service training should also be available and a requirement of the work. Fdcs with several years experience should be able get qualifications through demonstrating their competence.
- 3) **Regular supervision** of fdcs is needed to provide support and to identify whenever a fdc may need extra training or other assistance. The supervisors ought to be especially trained for this work, and preferably have personal experience of working as fdcs themselves, in order to understand the work and its particular difficulties;

there should also be special training, both basic and in-service, for the supervisors.

- 4) The situation for individual children, parents and fdc's should be **regularly reviewed**, as a basis for career development and improving the quality of service provided.
- 5) **Parents' influence should be enhanced** at every stage in the process of finding and using services for young children. Naturally, a good supply of different types of service, with adequate financial support, are necessary to give parents a genuine choice between different options. Having decided what type of service they want, parents should have access to help in finding the place that suits them and their child best, while leaving the final decision with the parents. After the placement parents might sometimes need further guidance, and this should always be available. Parents ought to have a real influence on what happens to their children during the day, and the means to ensure this influence should be established, such as parent boards for organised fdc schemes.
- 6) The position of fdc's in the labour market should be improved to reflect the importance and value of the work they do. Opportunities for other people, men and women, to develop careers and improve their income should not depend on the exploitation of women working as fdc's. Fdc's, like other workers with young children, should have **proper pay and working conditions (i.e. appropriate to the importance and value of their work) and access to normal social rights.**

These proposals conform with the principles in the Council Recommendation on Child Care. In some countries they may seem unrealistic, but in some others they are accepted as objectives and are on the way to being achieved. In particular, **Finland** provides an example of a country which has gone a long way to establishing a family day care system that meets these recommendations.

In Finland, the employed fdc's have an agreement giving them a monthly salary. This salary also gives them the full range of social rights enjoyed by all employees: sick leave, maternity and parental leave and holidays, all paid, as well as health services and pension. If the fdc is a member of the trade union, she also gets unemployment benefit. In addition, each fdc receives a tax-free allowance for her expenses.

The working hours of the fdc's are laid down as 90 hours for 2 weeks. If parents need more time than that, the fdc gets overtime pay. To avoid problems, the fdc, the parents and the supervisor draw up a contract, with all conditions clearly defined.

It is possible for a fdc to be self-employed, negotiating herself with the parents. But as a safeguard for all parties, the self-employed fdc has to register with her local authority who has an obligation to inspect and supervise all fdc's.

For the parents, the situation is very positive. There is no shortage of provision and therefore the parents can freely choose what kind they prefer. If they prefer a private, self-employed fdc, they have a 'Home Care' allowance to help pay the cost.

In Finland, training and education is seen as very important for all, including fdc's. Originally, a basic training course of 250 hours was compulsory for all publicly employed fdc's. But since 1993, a basic training course for all social and health workers has been available, and many fdc's now attend it. The basic training is available either for young people, directly after school, in which case it lasts 100 weeks; or for older men and women with work experience, in which case the length varies depending on the previous experience of the student.

Most of the training is common for all social and health workers. But the last 10-20 weeks consist of specialized courses, for example working with young children. In order to participate in the specialized courses, the student has to prove qualified through different tests of his or her professional skills.

One of the main theories behind this training programme is that knowledge is shown through action. Students therefore can be assessed in normal - or almost normal - working situations, together with written or oral presentations. Having passed all the assessments the student gets a qualification, which can be the basis for further studies in university or high school.

This training can lead to many new opportunities for fdc's, who would like to develop their careers further. It is possible for a fdc to get further education and to move on to work as a supervisor for other fdc's. It is also a very good way of keeping valuable experience of working with children within the family day care sector.



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