

The provision of childcare services: A comparative review of 30 European countries ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

- Report in pdf ^[2]

Description:

In recent decades, childcare services have become a matter of serious public concern.

Affordable and good-quality childcare services may improve the reconciliation of work and family life and thus foster labour market participation and gender equality. Childcare facilities may also provide an important answer to declining fertility rates, by lowering the cost of childbearing in terms of labour market and career opportunities. Finally there is a growing tendency to see childcare services from a social pedagogical perspective. In this perspective the main policy rationale is no longer the reconciliation of work and care, but rather the contribution of childcare services to child development and socioeconomic integration. The importance of providing childcare services has also been recognised at the EU level. At the Barcelona Summit in 2002, some explicit conclusions and targets were defined with regard to the provision of childcare services. Confirming the goal of full employment, the European Council agreed that Member States should remove disincentives to female participation in the labour market and strive to provide childcare by 2010 to at least 90 % of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age and at least 33 % of children under 3 years of age.

Taking into account EU-SILC data on the provision of childcare services, this report provides an analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative provision of childcare services for 27 EU Member States and three European Economic Area (EEA) countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. It discusses the extent to which the demand for childcare is covered, the importance attached to childcare services within the national context, and the policies developed at the national level to improve the provision of childcare facilities.

The report is organised as follows. Chapter 1 deals with the importance of childcare services within the context of labour force participation, gender equality, the fertility rate and social integration. Chapter 2 evaluates the availability, quality, and affordability of childcare services. Chapter 3 presents the recent policies developed at the national level with regard to the provision of childcare services. Finally, Chapter 4 provides a short summary and the main conclusions.

Region: Europe ^[3]

Tags: affordability ^[4]

quality ^[5]

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mother's labour force participation ^[8]

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