

Access to childcare in Europe: Parents' logistical challenges in cross-national perspective ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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Abstract A burgeoning comparative literature has identified the centrality of childcare policy and provision in promoting parental, and specifically maternal, participation in paid employment across countries. This literature has focused on the importance of macro-level institutional arrangements, with a special emphasis on variation in availability of, and access to, formal early childhood education and care services. However, there has been limited comparative exploration of what this means in practice at the micro-level: the everyday challenges parents face when attempting to navigate the childcare system and the labour market simultaneously. Taking inspiration from human geography literature on the concept of 'space-time fixity', we present cross-national findings on the logistical challenges of arranging childcare. Evidence is drawn from interviews with parent- and childcare-related organizations in six European countries: Germany, Hungary, Italy, Slovenia, Sweden and the UK. Our research provides a richer understanding of childcare availability than would a sole focus on formal childcare services, by elucidating the difficulties parents face in organizing access to these services, which can be a challenge to some extent even in contexts where childcare services are comprehensive and affordable.

Region: Europe ^[3]

Tags: affordability ^[4]

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