

Report on Internet Search for Good Case Examples of Community Child Care in CEE Countries

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An Internet search on good case examples of community child care for low-income women in CEE countries reveals a lack of information on operational programs in the region. The search did find references for many child care service programs for special populations, including community programs for children with handicaps, street children, Roma children, child refugees, and dysfunctional families. Based on information posted on Internet websites, it appears that most public and private resources for child care services are being directed to these populations. Perhaps, this is not surprising given the high level of need of special child populations in CEE countries.

Another factor that may reduce the focus on special community programs of child care for low-income women is that those CEE countries with the necessary resources provide public child care for pre-school age children, unrelated to family income, thereby alleviating the need for special community programs. The Czech Republic, for example, provides child care for children at risk in day care centers for ages 2-6 when the child is school age. However, child care before the age of 2 in the Czech Republic is primarily provided informally by family members. In addition, internet websites suggest that many religious institutions, especially those sponsored by Catholic and Jewish institutions, have facilities for community child care for pre-school age children, as well as for some special needs children.

There is reason to believe, however, that there are more community child care programs in existence than can be found on the Internet. This assumption is based on the relative large volume of work written on the relationship between child care and women in the labour market in both government and NGO position papers posted on the Internet. These documents suggest that there may well be stronger activity at the community level that is unpublicized. Or it may be that these local organizations have little need to have a website or are unable to devote the resources to have a website created or maintained. This does not necessarily mean that there is an absence of community child care programs.

Community Child Care or Day Care Case Examples

One illustration of community child care programs that is not found on the Internet is a program aimed at providing affordable community child care services in Yambol, Bulgaria. There is no mention of this case example on the Internet and knowledge of its existence came only as a result of an email to Counterpart International, an organization known to the External Collaborator (<http://www.counterpart.org/dnn/>). In response to an inquiry to Maria Ilcheva, the Program Director of Counterpart International, for assistance on identifying community child care programs, Ms. Ilcheva provided information that her organization is supporting the Yambol child care program as a social enterprise. More specific details have been requested and will be provided as an addendum to this report when they are received. Similar inquiries have been sent to other organizations and colleagues and any informative responses will be forwarded.

One of the few case illustrations of community child care that is noted on the Internet is reported by the World Bank. This is a reference to a new community day care center for children age 3 to 6 in Liaskovetz, Bulgaria that is part of a larger project supported by a \$50 million loan to the Bulgarian government through the Social Investment Fund. For additional information see: <http://www.worldbank.bg/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/ECAEXT/BULGARIAEXTN/0,,contentMDK:20569737~pagePK:141137~piPK:141127~theSitePK:305439,00.html>.

Mother Centers

Although, with some notable exceptions, there is little mention on the Internet of case illustrations of community child care, there is one model in particular for which there are case examples that are operating in CEE countries. This is the community model of the “Mother Centre.”

The Mother Centre model reflects an emphasis on a systemic and comprehensive approach to community child care. In other words, a wide range of services, including child care, are provided to help address the multi-faceted issues confronting low income, abused, neglected, and other needy women with children that may enable them to re-enter or stay in the labour market.

Mother Centres are apparently a grassroots movement that started in Germany as an outgrowth of a project at the German Youth Institute in Munich. They were created to address the needs of women and children and to strengthen family and neighborhood structures. They have been established in the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, Bulgaria, and Bosnia/Herzegovina, as well as in Russia, Georgia, and Turkey. It is difficult to ascertain from descriptions on the Internet websites the extent to which these Centres provide child care services, but the illustrations below indicate that at least some of the Mother Centres make child care available in the interest of helping women gain employment or sustaining them in the formal or informal labour markets.

The Slovakia Republic

One country that is promoting Mother Centres (MC) is the Union of Mother Centers (UMC) in Bratislava, Slovakia that was established nationwide in 2003. As of 2005, there are over 60 MCs in Slovakia. According to the information on the web, “Mother Centres practice user-led, community-oriented and family friendly forms of childcare,” “they offer assistance to re-enter the labour market,” and some Centres “are experimenting with income-generating activities to sustain themselves.” The following web site lists the members of the UMC in Slovakia: http://www.materskecentrum.sk/user/view_page.php?page_tag=materskecentraEn_ The UMC has been emailed requesting assistance in identifying the best practice models.

Bosnia

There are also Mother Centres in Bosnia. The establishment of these Centres was apparently accomplished with the assistance of the Mother and Family Centers in Baden-Wuerttemberg, Germany. There is a brief description of three Centres in Bosnia on the web at: <http://www.muetterforum.de/en/News/>. Some highlights related to these three Centres from the Mütterforum center website include:

The Center "Mütterklub" – Sanski Most

The Center is located in the rooms of the non-profit womens' healthcare organization Fenix which will help make the Centre sustainable as a Mother Center after the end of the project. This year a conceptual workshop is being organized for the women of "Mütterklub" to be held by Mother Center women from Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Rut Kolinksa, "mother" of the Czech Mother Centers, will also be part of this workshop.

The Center "ReDo" - Sarajevo

The center "ReDo" in Sarajevo is, by virtue of its location in the Bosnian capital, politically very important for the future of all Mother Centers in the country. One activity is a consulting and exchange visit by Andrea Laux/Mütterforum, as well as one of the active women of the center "Insel" in Friedrichshafen/Germany which is a sister city of Sarajevo.

The Center "Plamen" – Zavidovici

The center "Plamen" is well-known as a lively and active center and an important part of the lives of many citizens of Zavidovici. "Plamen" will receive base funding from the Stiftung für Bildung und Behindertenförderung in Stuttgart, in order to be able to buy a house. Other foundations, companies, organizations or persons willing to increase this base and help to find a real, sustainable home for "Plamen" are being sought.

The Mothers Centre International Network for Empowerment (MINE) held a town hall meeting in Sarajevo on 9 October 2005 that included reports from programs in Bosnia, the Czech Republic, and Germany. A description of the meeting is on the web at: <http://www.mine.cc/files/Sarajevo.pdf>. The website for MINE is: <http://www.mine.cc/files/mineflyer.pdf>. Additional information on Mother Centres is available from the Association for Women's Rights in Development.

Turkey

The concept of Mother Centres has spread to Turkey. One example is the "Life for Children" project in the KA-MER Centre in Diyarbakir, Turkey in eastern and south-eastern Anatolia. Again, this is a comprehensive approach to provide support and training for women, including child care. The general aim of the project 'Life for Children' is to challenge cultural, traditional or educational practices which are harmful to women and children living in eastern and south-eastern Anatolia and to develop models to support women's groups in raising their

children while respecting their rights. More information is on the web at:
http://www.bernardvanleer.org/partners/Europe/Turkey_-_KA-MER_Women_Centre

Child Care Co-Operatives

Child care co-operatives appear to be initiatives that adapt the traditional approach to social economy and social enterprise in business co-operatives to social service agencies. This is in response to shrinking government resources and public policies that promote local community investment in sustainable service systems. Most child care co-operatives are currently found in Canada, New Zealand, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

According to the British Columbia Institute for Co-operative Studies (Canada), “child care co-operatives are formed to provide quality child care and/or education in which parents are strongly involved.” “There are three basic types: preschool co-ops, daycare co-ops, and babysitting co-ops.” There are 1,000 child care co-operatives in Canada and 580 in New Zealand. For additional information on the Internet see:

http://web.uvic.ca/bcics/research/social/Child_Care/what.htm

Some case examples of child care co-operatives in England include:

Oswald Road Childcare Club Ltd. - Manchester

The Oswald Road Childcare Club Ltd (also known as the Owl Club) was set up in December 1993 by the parents of the children attending Oswald Road School. Set up as a user co-operative, the parents elected a committee, from themselves to manage the club. The club provides before and after school services and during the school holidays they operate a play-scheme on an alternate basis with two other local co-operative childcare clubs. It is £5.25 per session and has filled its 72 places. Its premises are on the schools grounds and are rented from the school.

Playtots Childcare Ltd.- Plymouth

Playtots Childcare Ltd began in January 1999. The service was set up as a worker co-operative by two childcare workers who realized that the local provision was far from satisfactory and had long waiting lists.

Playtots is a nursery and pre school that also provides breakfast, after school and holiday club services. There are currently 17 members of staff and 58 children's places, which will soon extend to 70. Cost for the services is varied, starting from £2 per hour.

Initially the service was given guidance and financial support from the Pre School Learning Alliance, the Local Authority and the Local Prison Charity Fund. After contacting Co-Active the regional co-operative development body in their area, a successful bid was made for neighborhood nursery funding. Support continued and more recently the service has received financial support for more staff training through Business Link. Problems were encountered along the way, but the founders overcame these by inviting organizations and individuals to become personally involved. They did this through encouragement to visit the service at various stages, explaining how far they had come and what help they now needed to meet their goals.

The Little Elms Pre-School - Witham

Little Elms is a pre-school based in Witham, Essex. The service converted to a worker co-operative in February 2005 to make the pre-school more manageable for parents and workers. The pre-school has 24 children's places and it charges £4.50 per session. In order to convert to a co-operative the workers liaised with the Pre-School Learning Alliance and their local co-operative development agency, Co-operative Assistance Network. For additional information see: See <http://www.co-opunion.coop/live/cme643.htm>.

Report Highlights

- There are very few case examples of community child care programs in CEE countries posted on the Internet.
- There is reason to believe that the current postings on the Internet under represent the actual numbers of such programs.
- The case examples in Yambol, Bulgaria and in Liaskovetz, Bulgaria are two specific models that merit additional investigation. The director of the program in Yambol has emailed that she will send more specific details to the External Collaborator.
- The comprehensive “Mother Centres” model in the Slovak Republic, Bosnia, and Turkey appears to be a viable approach worth consideration.
- The child care co-operative model is an innovative approach in Canada and the United Kingdom that may have possibilities in CEE countries.
- Emails inquiries requesting help in identifying community child care programs in CEE countries have been sent to several organizations and agencies by the External Collaborator and any informative responses will be forwarded to the ILO Subregional Office for Central and Eastern Europe.