



C.R.E.A. – Children Rights and Education of Adults



RESEARCH REPORT





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

C.R.E.A. – Children Rights and Education of Adults, is a project financed by the European Commission, under the Socrates – Grundtvig programme. This programme finances projects that revolve around adult education. In 2004, 72 projects were financed in the framework of Grundtvig, among which 32, including C.R.E.A., directly aimed at developing and implementing European training courses.

The promoter of the project is the Consorzio CO&SO Firenze, a consortium of 36 social cooperatives whose area of work stretches from running of services for infants and children, to services for elderly, minorities and disabled people, to activities for the job insertion of disadvantaged groups to training, publishing and printing.

The project partners are: COFACE (Confederation of Family Organisations in the EU), the European umbrella organisation that represents family and parental organisations in Europe; the faculty of Pedagogy of the Vilnius College in Higher Education (Vilnius, Lithuania); DIESIS (European and International Research and Development Structure for Co-operatives and the Social Economy), a European structure funded by cooperative organisations from different European countries; and La Bottega di Geppetto, the Centre for Research and Documentation on Childhood of the Municipality of S. Miniato (Pisa, Italy).

C.R.E.A. aims at creating a support for professionals who work in the field of adult education (and mainly with parents of children in early ages) by helping parents in the exercise of “Active citizenship” for the promotion of children rights.

The project partners are aware that *parents can play a real and effective role in the promotion of children rights*, leading actions in the application of active citizenship. However, at present this role is not entirely played and many opportunities to promote children rights are not exploited. People, families, parents are not aware of the whole range of opportunities for an active and democratic participation in the decision-making process that are offered by Public Authorities and/or other organisations, mainly associations and social enterprises. The last ones are in fact the most interesting and less known organisations, but they can play a very important role. They can be defined *multistakeholder structures*, that is enterprises operating in the social sector, with the active participation of all groups of people representing a social need. In such a structure, parents themselves are stakeholders and are able to express their needs (that is, in this case, the needs of their children), to propose solutions and to take part in the realisation of actions that can satisfy such needs.

At present, what is necessary is to make parents aware of all the existing opportunities to defend children's rights, to motivate them towards a real and active participation, to “educate” them to an effective active citizenship.

The European Union has expressed the need to improve actions of adult learning, but any activity in adult learning needs the development of tools, skills, methods and knowledge that can be adequate for the single target group they are referred to.

This is what C.R.E.A. is going to develop: *a handbook, a CD-Rom and a training course for professionals, social managers, educators involved in activities with families and parents.*



The first activity to be implemented in the framework of the project has been the drafting of a **research** about:

- **methods and pedagogical approach** in adult/parents education
- **tools and opportunities** of active participation and **active citizenship** offered by public authorities and private organisations, mainly associations and social enterprises
- **European legislative frame** regarding children's rights

Each partner has been responsible for the drafting of one of the chapters that constitute this research report, namely:

COFACE accepted to prepare the chapter on existing EU legislative texts relating to the rights of the child;

VILNIUS COLLEGE was responsible for the second chapter, that investigates existing training methodologies and approaches for parents;

LA BOTTEGA DI GEPPETTO has prepared the chapter related to the planning of *ad hoc* training courses for parents on the exercise of active citizenship; and finally

DIESIS was responsible for the drafting of the chapter on the role and functioning of organisations of the social economy and their role in raising awareness on the exercise of active citizenship.

In addition, each organisation has provided links to organisations, networks and projects relating to the themes addressed by the project: promotion and protection of children's rights, European active citizenship, the organisation and implementation of training courses for parents of children in early ages.



1. EUROPEAN LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND FAMILY POLICIES

Introduction

The first statement that should be made is that the EU has hardly adopted any European legislation relating explicitly and directly to the rights of children. This does not mean that: a) nothing exists, and b) the existing EU legislation in a certain number of fields does not have an important impact on children's lives and rights.

The following chapter will first examine the EU provisions that explicitly refer to the rights of children – a rather limited role of the EU, and then look more in depth into the EU legislation which affects children, directly or indirectly.

We also wish to stress, right from the start, that our approach of the rights of the child includes the major role of the family environment for children. Many child protection agencies consider the child as totally disconnected from his/her family context, only taking the family into consideration in the very negative circumstances of violence or abuse. On the contrary, we stress the primary importance for children to be brought up, to live and to be loved in their normal family environment, whatever the status of their parents and whatever their family model : traditional, single-parent, reconstituted family,...

The first right of the child is indeed to be raised by both his/her parent. This has been very officially recognised by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted in November 1989. All EU member States have ratified this Convention.

I. EU legislation addressing children's rights

Nearly all EU provisions in the field of children's rights have been adopted in view of protecting the child against exploitation, violence and abuse.

Combating child sex tourism

On 27 November 1996, the EU Commission published a Communication on combating child sex tourism in three priority areas:

- deterring and punishing child sex abusers
- stemming the flow of sex tourists from the member States
- helping to combat sex tourism in third countries.

With these priority areas in mind, the member States need to take practical steps to combat child sex tourism in view of the countries of origin of the tourists involved, to prevent the development of child prostitution in Europe and because they have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In December 1999, the Council adopted conclusions on the implementation of measures to combat child sex tourism and encouraged the development of initiatives in four fields of action: raising awareness of the phenomenon of child sex tourism, strengthening the effectiveness of laws and



law enforcement, including extraterritorial criminal laws, intensifying efforts to stem the flow of sex tourists from member States and developing measures to combat sex tourism in third countries.

Combating child pornography on the Internet

On 29 May 2000, the Council of Ministers adopted a Decision to combat child pornography on the Internet. This had become necessary in view of the scale reached by this form of crime.

In particular, member States are to take measures to :

- encourage Internet users to inform law enforcement authorities if they suspect that child pornography material is being distributed on the Internet;
- ensure that offences are investigated and punished, by setting up specialised units within the law enforcement authorities, for example;
- ensure that the law enforcement authorities react rapidly when they receive information on alleged cases of the production, processing, distribution and possession of child pornography.

Search for missing or sexually exploited children

In 2001, the Council of Ministers adopted a Resolution on the contribution of civil society in finding missing or sexually exploited children.

Member States are called upon to encourage cooperation between civil society and competent authorities in particular by:

- providing a free 24-hour hot-line to collect information on missing or sexually abused children;
- making available volunteers for organised searches of missing children;
- providing support for missing children.

Framework decision on combating the sexual exploitation of children and child pornography

In order to clarify previous decisions and to harmonise the legislative and regulatory provisions of the member States concerning police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters with a view to combating trafficking in human beings, the sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, the Council of Ministers adopted a Framework Decision on 22 December 2003.

It introduces common European provisions to address certain issues such as the creation of offences, penalties, aggravating circumstances, jurisdiction and extradition.

Children and armed conflict

On 8 December 2003, the Council adopted EU guidelines on children and armed conflict. They are intended to highlight the issue and give more prominence to EU actions in this area. Promotion and respect for children's rights are set in the context of the EU's human rights policy.

The guidelines concern following fields: information on children in armed conflicts, the practical measures taken by the EU (funding of projects, such as ECHO, promotion, signing, ratification and application of international legal instruments), international cooperation.



EU Constitutional Treaty

One of the main objectives included in the now (ill-)famous Constitutional Treaty of the EU, refers explicitly to the protection of the rights of the child. This is an important move forward towards a Union more respectful of children and their rights.

The second part of the Treaty contains the European Charter on Fundamental Rights, where several articles concern children and families and the support that these must be given.

One will see what remains of these provisions when the current ratification process is finalised in 2006.

II. EU legislation and measures addressing issues having an impact on children

In this part of the chapter, we look at EU provisions that, without being aimed specifically at children, do have a genuine influence on their daily life. These provisions stem mainly from the issue of equal opportunities between women and men and are adopted in the context of further gender mainstreaming.

Family reunification

This important piece of EU legislation is a Council Directive adopted on 22 September 2003 on the right to family reunification.

The aim of the Directive is to establish common rules of Community law relating to the right to family reunification of third country nationals residing lawfully on the territory of the member States. Family reunification protects the family and makes it easier to integrate nationals of non-member countries in the member States. It should therefore be a recognised right throughout the Union.

Polygamy is not recognised: only one wife can benefit from the right to reunification. Likewise, children of the ineligible wives are excluded from the right to reunification unless the child's greater interest warrants it (pursuant to the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child).

Reconciling family life and work: a vast domain of EU legislative initiatives

It is often overlooked that the European Community - now the European Union - played a big role in advancing gender equality policies from the very first, and especially so during the 1970s.

The issue of balancing work, family and private life cannot be divorced from that of gender equality. Situations in the EU Member States differ widely here. The traditional but real divide is between northern - chiefly Scandinavian - Europe, which has developed systems geared towards promoting women's empowerment, especially through individual social protection rights supported by extensive child care provision, and southern - essentially Mediterranean - Europe, where the traditional mother-homemaker family model still predominates. Between the two lie the middle countries, which, like Belgium and France, have a more northern profile, or Germany and Austria, more oriented towards the southern model.

In terms of children's rights to the time of their parents, these considerations are of the utmost importance.

Developments in EU legislation

In the past, social policy worked on the assumption of a "breadwinner" (i.e., the husband) earning



the sole keep for a dependent wife and children. The other side of the equation was the expectation that after marriage, the wife would be the sole family caregiver. This left few potential areas of conflict between the male sphere of work and the domestic sphere of the married woman. Now, the “male breadwinner” and “female homemaker” stereotypes no longer match the dominant family patterns in Europe. Women are in the labour market, and have become “economically active”. This brings the work-life balance issue into play.

The 1957 Treaty of Rome, which established the European Community, enshrined the principle that men and women should receive equal pay for equal work (article 141, former article 119).

From 1975, a series of directives extended this principle to equal treatment as regards access to employment, training and promotion in order to eliminate all employment-related discrimination. Thereafter, equal treatment was developed in social security, both statutory and occupational schemes.

The main directives are:

- Equal Pay Directive (1975)
- Equal Treatment at Work Directive (1976)
- Equal Treatment in Statutory Social Security Schemes Directive (1979)
- Equal Treatment in Occupational Social Security Schemes Directive (1986).

As a result, the European Community has taken a series of measures to improve work-life balance.

The Council adopted a Recommendation on child care on 31 March 1992.

It recommended that Member States should take and/or progressively encourage initiatives to enable women and men to reconcile their occupational, family and upbringing responsibilities arising from the care of children in four areas:

- affordable, good quality childcare provision
- special leave for employed parents who want properly to discharge their occupational family and upbringing responsibilities by providing, *inter alia*, some flexibility as to how leave may be taken
- creating an environment, structure and organisation of work that take account of the need of working parents
- a more equal sharing of parental responsibilities between men and women to enable women to have a more effective role in the labour market.

An important milestone was passed in 1997. The Amsterdam Treaty extended the scope of article 141 (which concerned only equal pay) to include the promotion of equality between men and women in article 2 of the EC Treaty which lists the European Community’s self-appointed tasks. Article 3 of the EC Treaty also makes the aim of eliminating inequalities and promoting equality between men and women in all European Community activities into a fundamental objective of the Community.

Furthermore, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union adopted in 2000 includes a section headed “Equality” which includes the principles of equality between men and women. It states that equality between men and women must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay.

On 29 June 2000, the Council adopted a Resolution on the balanced participation of women and men in family and working life. The Resolution’s basic principle is that the balanced participation of



women and men in both the labour market and family life is an advantage to both men and women, and an essential aspect of the development of society, and that maternity, paternity and the rights of children are eminent social values to be protected by society, the Member States and the European Union. The Resolution therefore encourages the Member States to develop strategies to promote that aim, and at the same time calls on the social partners to step up their efforts to ensure balanced participation by men and women in family and working life.

Thereafter, the European Union began to take an even closer interest in reconciling family life and working life, making it a priority strand of the fifth Community action programme to promote equality for women and men (2001-2005).

The Council Decision of 22 July 2003 on guidelines for the Member States' employment policies also pays particular attention to reconciling work and private life, notably through the provision of care services for children and other dependants, encouraging the sharing of family and professional responsibilities, and facilitating return to work after a period of absence. The Member States are called on to remove disincentives to female labour force participation and strive, taking into account the demand for childcare facilities and in line with national patterns of childcare provision, 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.

The Commission points out that reconciliation policy must not be considered either as a “women's issue” or a policy from which only women will benefit. A major challenge is to focus on policies to encourage men to take up more family responsibilities, for the benefit of both parents. The Commission makes a strong call for the development of financial and/or other incentives to encourage men to take on a larger role in the family as well as awareness-raising initiatives to change attitudes, especially among employers.

Work-life balance moved further up the agenda in 2004 - the 10th anniversary of the International Year of the Family. In connection with that and International Women's Day, the European Parliament adopted on 9 March 2004 a Resolution on reconciling professional, family and private lives. As well as calling for innovative measures involving employers and work organisation, it also urged the European Commission to take the measures necessary to draw up a framework directive on reconciling professional and family lives, to organise an annual conference on the matter, and introduce pilot projects on it. The Resolution also brings in the idea of “family mainstreaming”, along the lines of the existing “gender mainstreaming”, encouraging Member States, new accession States and the Commission to analyse the impact of their policies on families. The passing of a Resolution like this just ahead of the June 2004 European elections illustrates the political scope and electoral importance of the issue.

In short, even though the subsidiarity principle puts family policy outside the EU's competences, its Institutions have long been overtly concerned with the well-being of families. Currently, families and family life have gained renewed attention by the EU. This is due to the overall concern in the member States and at EU institutional level of the demographic challenges on Europe's doorstep. Ageing societies, falling birth-rates, migration pressures,... all these factors contribute to putting the family and child dimension higher on the agenda. What is needed now is formal recognition of this dimension in European policies.

Overview of means available to working families to improve work-life balance

What follows is an attempted comparison of how the situations in some countries measure up in



terms of the main means available to facilitate work-life balance.

a) Part-time work

Part-time work is in a very real sense a means of reconciling working and family life. It accounts for more than 17% of total employment in Europe. Although part-time work is generally predominantly female (nearly a third of female against less than 5% of male employment), there are marked differences between countries. Part-time work is still undertaken predominantly by women in northern Europe as a response to differing situations: means of access to work for women in the Netherlands, often linked to inadequate child care facilities in the United Kingdom. In the Scandinavian countries, it addresses demand from the women workers themselves. In France, the public authorities have encouraged its development with a view to combating unemployment while satisfying companies' flexibility requirements, and this has helped to develop the creation of part-time jobs concentrated in certain areas of activity for relatively unskilled positions with awkward working hours.

The report by the Task Force on Employment submitted to the Spring European Summit of March 2004 found that growth in fixed-term and part-time employment had come to a halt in 2002. The trend now is towards convergence, with part-time and fixed-term work rising sharply in Member States where it is under-represented (except in Spain, Greece and Ireland). Some Member States have improved the opportunities for part-time work. Some still see reconciliation of working and family life as purely a women's issue, while others recognise men's role in childcare and family responsibilities.

Part-time is under-developed in the 10 new States.

The Task Force therefore encourages the Member States and social partners to eliminate the obstacles to part-time work and make it more financially attractive to employers and workers.

b) Leave

Various kinds of leave can help reconcile working and family life: maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, leave for family reasons (sick children and other people in need of care, etc.).

The recent evidence is that substantive progress has been achieved at European level in recognition of rights to leave. All European countries have now introduced a right to parental leave, but situations still vary widely in practice, especially as regards the length of leave, and whether it is paid or not.

Parental leave varies between 13 weeks per parent in the United Kingdom (14 in Ireland) up to around 3 years in Germany, Spain, France and Portugal. It is unpaid in the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Netherlands, Greece, Portugal and Spain; paid at a low level (as a fixed-level payment subject to certain conditions such as the number of children) in Germany, Austria, Belgium and France; in contrast, it is higher in Luxembourg and in all the Nordic countries, where it is usually a proportion of previous wages.

In those new Member States that have it, available information suggests that parental leave can be as much as 3 years (Czech Republic, Slovakia) or 2 years (Hungary, Poland). It is paid only in Hungary and Poland.

In all cases, however, parental leave remains largely oriented towards women. As a result, some countries have introduced arrangements to encourage fathers to take leave: in Austria and Italy, the total length of the leave is extended if the father takes a part of it. In Sweden, Belgium and Greece, each parent has a distinct right to leave and this right is lost if not taken. In Sweden, for example, the duration of paid parental leave is 480 days, 60 days of which are



reserved for the father and mother, respectively.

Despite all these incentives, parental leave is taken predominantly by women (approximately 90%), but with appreciably lower take-up in the Netherlands (57%) and Finland (68%).

Finally, most countries provide days of leave to care for sick children. Here, too, there are wide variations in length, from 2 days' paid leave in Luxembourg to 120 days in Sweden. In most countries, there is no specific legislation on care for dependent persons but, on the other hand, leave for sick children can often be extended to other members of the household or even outside the household (Austria). But there is little quantified data available on any of these legislative measures.

c) Childcare

Even though here again, situations vary widely between countries and the number of different arrangements renders comparison very difficult, it can be safely said that no old or new Member State has sufficient publicly-funded places for all children under 3 years of age. The Scandinavian countries are again the best equipped, but only Sweden, Denmark and Belgium (Flanders) have already hit the Barcelona 2010 target of 33% of places for children in this age group.

In fact, childcare efforts are mainly focussed on 3 to 6-year-olds. In 9 countries (of the EU-15), more than 80% of the children in this age group have state childcare, with the highest rates of more than 90% in France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy and Denmark. The situation is improving for children in this age group, but many countries make no provision for childcare outside school hours, although this has a decisive impact on the parents' ability to hold down a job. The countries that still face the biggest challenges in improving childcare provision, especially for the under-3s, are Italy, Germany, Austria, Luxembourg, the United Kingdom, Spain, Greece, Ireland and Portugal. Many Member States have set national objectives for improving childcare provision (Belgium, France, Greece, Ireland, Portugal and the United Kingdom). But too rarely do the policies pursued make the link between expanding childcare and the needs of the labour market, and pay little attention to quality and affordability issues. The potential pitfalls contained in the policies that reinforce traditional gender role distribution - like childcare allowance systems, and sitter service subsidies - seem to attract no attention. Practical measures on care for other dependent people have generally not been forthcoming.

Some countries organise care outside school hours, using state or private systems, even attempting to fit in with parents' needs (crèche hours) in the Scandinavian countries, France and the Netherlands. Generally, school hours are not compatible with full-time work for both parents, unless childcare solutions, whether informal or private, are found.

But, it is essential that this dimension be taken into account in striving for balance between family life and working life, as non-negotiable demands for flexibility in work organisation mean that a growing number of employees have to work non-standard working hours. With Saturday working becoming normal and irregular hours frequent for both men and women, it seems vital that childcare timetables should be better able to meet the needs of families.

This means that the EU generally must have sufficient affordable childcare provision. The impact of parenthood on women's employment, in particular, makes childcare a crucial issue.

d) Social protection expenditure

Social protection systems differ from one country to another, depending on whether they are based on taxation or social security contributions, in the form either of benefits in kind or tax relief.

But to address families' needs, social protection must remain a solidarity-based system. Social



protection cannot be a multi-tier system between a bare minimum for those on the bottom rung of the social status scale, and a range of supplements and private insurance opportunities for those with the knowledge and resources to take advantage of them.

A real family policy must be directed towards all families, and all children should be entitled to child benefits; not necessarily all the same amount, but all should have some entitlement: and that is a long way off in Europe!

While it is essential to put a special focus on families with specific difficulties, a balance must be struck between supporting them as a priority and not disregarding families generally, especially those who live near the breadline, and are kept above it mainly by family benefits. The risk of income caps which are often set at quite low levels and drift downwards over time, is of increasing poverty and pushing those who live just above the poverty line down below it.

Also, the family dimension of social security is about more than just child benefits; it also includes other sectors, especially sickness and invalidity insurance (medical care for children), unemployment insurance (personal rights), pensions (allowing for periods of parental and family responsibility leave), and disability allowances.

A serious study is needed at national and European levels of the feasibility of individualising women and men's rights to social security benefits. There is an urgent need to adapt social protection systems to the varied mix of family patterns and devise solutions that deliver greater equality of opportunity for all children while respecting both the traditional family and new family models.

e) Availability of services

As we have seen, child care provision in day nurseries and other early childhood care facilities is limited. Also, the demand for out-of-school child care provision is not met in any EU Member State, and the family remains the main source of assistance.

Home welfare services (home helps, medical and nursing/health visiting care, etc.) are underfunded on all fronts, and mostly targeted on priority services for the elderly. Decentralisation of services in some EU countries has the undeniable benefit of bringing decision-making and action closer to the individual. But there is another side to the coin: apart from the big risks of a "postcode lottery" developing, it is clear that local and regional authority funding may not always be sufficient to address the community's needs. Budget restrictions may - and in some countries already have - led to cutbacks in these sectors leading to the prospect - with all its financial and human costs - of an increasing use of institutional care for the sick, elderly and disabled, the difficulties and costs necessarily involved in having to contend with the situations that have got worse over time for want of preventative health or screening services, not to mention the added financial burden on families.

Granted, this key aspect of social policy is essentially a State, if not local government, responsibility; but the European Union still has an involvement through various action programmes and the regular exchange of information in social protection matters, in particular; this is not just an issue of cash benefits, but is also linked to the development of a network of services and facilities, especially in the community health sector.

Opening hours are another aspect of availability of services: it is important that couples who are both working and have children are able to do administrative business and household shopping at times compatible with their working hours. But the opening hours of public offices still tend to be rigid, although shops are more flexible. Experiments have been done in matching the opening hours of the different services (Italy, Germany, France), motivated by a desire to encourage equality between men and women via the crucial issue of social time management.



f) The division of labour within the family in terms of time budgeting

Another point of interest is the use of time in households and the link between working and home time. Unfortunately, the European data are incomplete and not reliable. Some points can be made, however: firstly, time at work and time at home are not shared equally between the sexes, and this is true for all countries. Men always spend more time at work, except in Denmark; secondly, unlike time at work, it is women who devote the most time to the various household tasks in all countries, although with wide country-to-country variations. Generally, women perform between 70 and 80% of all household and family tasks. The percentage varies with the age and number of children: the greater the burden (small children and/or large family), the less it is shared.... The Netherlands and Sweden are most egalitarian since, where children are over 6 years of age; women perform “only” 57 to 59% of all household tasks. As regards the use of working time by parents with children, women with children work on average 12 hours less a week than men with children in the EU-15 and 11 hours less in the EU-25.

The EU is increasingly aware of the important role played by families not only in bringing up their children, but also in the whole structure of society. In this context, all measures taken in support of families are indeed welcome, and the child and his/her rights should be central to the issue.

Bibliographical sources: official EU documents (Official Journal, Commission, European Parliament, Economic and Social Committee, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Europa website, and a Council of Ministers report under the French EU Presidency - II/2000, in particular a study on indicators done by R. Silvera and S. Lemière); Agence Europe press agency; Confederation of Family Organizations in the EU (COFACE).



2. INTEGRATED TRAINING METHODOLOGIES AND APPROACHES FOR PARENTS AND GOOD PRACTICE

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to give an example of adults' (and especially parents) pedagogical education process in society, by using some case studies derived from the Lithuanian experience on the subject. The information provided has been collected by the Vilnius College in Higher Education and is based on:

- methodological material and recommendations for school teachers and kindergarten pedagogues, on how to organise pedagogical education for parents in Lithuania,
- experience of pedagogues and parents on forms, methods, contents and effects of pedagogical education,
- experience in parents' training of the Faculty of Pedagogy at Vilnius College.

The traditional forms and methods for parents' education in schools and kindergartens of Lithuania

Families and schools are the cornerstones of children socialisation and education. Parents and teachers are both interested in the successful socialisation of the child. Teachers, as professional pedagogues, can help parents in solving many problems concerning their child. Truth is, nobody teaches adults how to be good parents. Parents' behaviours with their child derive much from their life experience in their own families, and from the traditions of raising children in the society of reference. In Lithuania for example, the tradition of raising children is rather conservative. Not every parent understands that childhood is a value; that children have their rights, and that these rights must be protected. Therefore, the education of parents is a very important function that is demanded to the school.

The traditional forms for the pedagogical education of parents are:

- **General education for groups of parents:**
Meetings,
Lectures,
Conferences,
Discussions,
Booklets, bulletin boards...
- **Special education for groups of parents and individuals:**
Discussions,
Observations of children activities in the class, "days of open doors",
Teacher's visits at home.



The typical work with groups of parents implies discussions on common problems, such as:

- the goals and methods of children education;
- psychological, physiological and pedagogical fundamentals of child education in different age periods;
- the relationships between children and parents;
- the relations between parents and school;
- the responsibilities of family members;
- the leisure and other possible activities for children;
- the education on healthy life styles.

The parents' meeting

Traditionally, the meeting is the main form of parents' pedagogical education at school. During these meetings some pedagogical information for parents is usually given, while at the same time answering to questions, doubts and requirements brought up by parents. Traditional meetings of parents are organised once every school term, and they have unfortunately proven not to be very popular amongst parents.

The main reasons why parents do not want to attend these meetings at school are:

- they are busy;
- teachers say nothing interesting;
- they do not want to feel uncomfortable, when the teachers speak about their child's problems;
- these meetings are useless, because they do not help to solve the real problems of family and child.

Teachers must analyse such points of view of the parents if they want to achieve results in the pedagogical education of parents through school meetings.

The meetings are more successful when:

- teachers get acquainted with the interests of parents;
- parents can discuss the problems they are interested in;
- parents share among teachers and themselves their own good experience about child education or other important problem solving ("round table");
- meetings are less formal. For example "tea and pie" meetings.

The traditional structure of the parents' meeting is:

- Opening. The teacher or someone of the parents' committee opens the meeting by introducing the agenda;
- Presentation of creative works of children, concert or performance;
- Announcement of the theme of the day;
- Discussion;
- Vote and Decision-making;
- Discussion about some new pedagogical publications.

This structure might be changed, according to the theme to be discussed and the preferences of teachers and parents. The main rule is not to discuss the personalities of children and personal problems publicly, in order not to injure the feelings of parents.

It is very important to summon more and more parents to the meeting. The content of the invitation is very important. It should indicate the subjects that will be discussed in the meeting and the content of the children's performance. Parents should be invited to take part actively in the discussion, and to spread the positive experience of their own family. The teachers may invite



parents personally by phone, especially if they are not active in attending these meetings. To choose the right time and place for the meeting it is also very important. It should be arranged not very late in the evening, and during the usual working hours of parents. The best option would be to ask parents about their preference for the time of the meeting.

The general aim of these meetings is that parents should be stimulated to formulate recommendations (for example on how to act in problematic situations or cases), together with teachers. These recommendations should then be printed and distributed among the parents, in order to stimulate the parents to solve the problems they might be experiences in their family.

The parents' meeting should boost parents' confidence in the teachers and in the school.

Lectures

This form of pedagogical parents' education is very old. A lecture is not effective if the audience is passive, not involved in the discussions, not interested.

Lectures must not be too long. The content of the lecture must be of interest to the audience, and relevant to the problems they might be experiencing. The information given in the lecture must stimulate parents to develop an interest in the theme, and to discuss the problem. Before arranging a lecture, the teacher must get to know the parents, their interests, problems and possibilities. The purpose of the lecture is to stimulate parents' self – education.

Q&A evenings

The success of such evenings depends in the first place on how the teacher manages to encourage parent to raise questions. Parents are usually too busy to ask questions or may be ashamed to admit there is a problem and might feel uncomfortable in talking openly about it. If the teachers decide to use written questionnaires, it usually takes 2 to 3 weeks to get the answers back from parents.

When the questionnaires are collected, they teacher then collect them into several groups according to the problems. If it is possible, he may invite professionals to answer the questions. If there is no such possibility, the teacher himself/herself gathers together similar questions. Parents are obviously invited to spread their own experience in solving problems in their own families. The main rule in such activity is: do not criticise anything and anybody.

The evening may be organised by a group of parents themselves, that decide which expert to invite, depending on the nature of the subject to be dealt with.

The main aim of this special type of parents' education is to analyse in a deeper way the present forms of children education, behaviour, relationship problems, and conflict situations.

Another purpose is to help parents to find the best possible means to deal with the problem or situation. According to the problems, parents can join a group, or individual training can be arranged.

This way of working with parents has two main goals. The first goal is to help parents gain confidence. The parent who feels confident is better able to enjoy his/her child and to learn about the needs of children and to use this knowledge more effectively.

The second goal is that of helping parents to gain the insights and the knowledge that may improve their contribution to a child's development.

The teacher may help parents feel that they are important in many small but significant ways, by for example:

- providing a comfortable place for parents to sit when they are waiting, a bulletin board with attractive, interesting material on it, and some magazines and books to browse or borrow;



- taking the time to listen to what parents wish to tell him/her. It is important for the parent to feel that he/she is being understood. In their relationship with parents, teachers will show interest, give encouragement, and avoid blame and criticism;
- respecting the deep feelings involved in any parent – child relationship. The teacher must remember that life with growing children, although it brings a lot of satisfaction and joy, also brings frustration and is extremely demanding.

We must respect parents if we are to help them feel confident. Good relationships are built on awareness and sympathy.

The second goal in working with parents is to help them to gain a better understanding of children and their needs. With more knowledge, parents' expectations for the child become more reasonable. Parents can take more interest in the child's development, and can better treasure the individuality of their child as a result of their increased understanding of growth and development.

Parents, or any of us, learn in a variety of ways:

- by observing a skilled person, as he/she performs a job;
- by discussing, raising questions and expressing feeling and attitudes;
- by acting and putting into practice what we have seen and discussed.

The days of "open doors", observation

Parents should feel free to observe at any time. However, observation is normally allowed only in kindergartens (and not always) and in some primary schools. More often, schools provide for "open door" days, when parents may participate in classrooms during lessons or activities and take part in them. Observation is an important opportunity for parents to see their child with other children.

Through observation parents may get useful tips on how to handle situations and activities. Observations may also clarify the significance and value of a certain behaviour that parents may not have noticed before in their child.

Parents should be encouraged to observe and have an opportunity to discuss with the teacher what they see.

Teachers' visits at home

This form of cooperation is often not so popular among parents and teachers. The main reason for this is the existence of poor relations between parents and teachers and the lack of confidence in these relationships. Nowadays, more and more kindergartens and schools, especially those working on the "Step by Step" programme, use this option and find it very successful.

The teacher may wish to observe a child at home in order to get a better insight into his/her behaviour at school, or to help parents and child to solve problems of relationships, learning problems, behavioural problems.

For a child, but also for the parents, the visit of the teacher may have a great significance. The visit demonstrates to the child that he/she is an important person to him/her. And parents, even though they may feel somewhat anxious and strained, may appreciate the visit. Parent – teacher relationships can be more comfortable as a result of this opportunity to visit outside the school environment. Afterwards, it may be easier for a parent to ask questions that are important to him/her and for the teacher to understand what these questions mean.



Individual conversations

Individual conversations with parents are arranged at school, in the park, in the café or some other quiet place. It can also be done by telephone.

Individual conversations represent one of the most valuable ways in which teachers and parents can share their observations of the child. Planned conversations may be held at regular intervals. Through conversations both parents and teacher can become more aware of how each may be of help to the other. As parents and teachers look at what is happening to the child, they may help him/her to develop his/her skills in the best way.

The initial contact between teacher and parent is important even if takes place by telephone. The parent's first impressions will influence his/her attitude towards the school and will somehow be conveyed to the child. The first conversation will probably occur as the child is about to enter the school. At this time parents are encouraged to talk about their child and they have the opportunity to raise questions about the school. The teacher listens, and together with the parents, tries to understand what the experience of entering the school or kindergarten may mean to the child. They decide the roles each will play in helping the child to adjust. There may be several short conversations for parents and teacher to share information during the adjustment process. The teacher accepts the responsibility for creating an atmosphere in which communication is easy, honest and direct.

In the conversations the teacher has with parents, he/she helps them approach problems, not by giving answers, but by listening to what solutions the parent has tried. The responsibility for solving most problems belongs to the parents, and the teacher should not attempt to take over this responsibility. He/she tries only to help the parent to solve a problem by listening, asking questions to clarify a point, or suggesting factors that may be related. He/she may point out the possible meanings of the child's behaviour and helps parents to think about the various solutions.

Group discussions

Group discussions provide parents with the opportunity to have contacts with other parents. They can share their concerns and talk about common problems. As a group they are all concerned with their children. It is often a relief for them to know that they are not alone in facing some problems. They may get help from each other in solving a specific problem.

Sometimes parents bring up particular situations for discussion. It is natural that parents will wish to discuss the particular problem of their own child, but the discussion leader (the teacher or one of the parents) needs then to bring the specific example on a more general level or group interest. Is this a problem which occurs frequently? Have some of you met this problem in other types of situations? What is your behaviour in such a situation? How would you solve it? Shall we look at reasons why this behaviour appears in children just at this point in their growth? Parents can be encouraged to bring forward problematic situations for discussion.

There are two typical problems in families:

- Very high parents' expectations for their child, not only with regards to behaviour, but also with regards to school performance;
- Very low parents' evaluations of their child (expecting nothing good from their child).

Both situations cause many problems for the child in particular and for the family as a whole. The teacher can help solve such problems.



During a discussion, the teacher may ask parents to write:

1. all the different behaviours of their child;
2. and then put them into two groups

| Good acts | Bad acts |
|-----------|----------|
| | |

These data make parents feel uncomfortable, especially, if the majority of the actions of his/her child are classified as “bad”. The other task for parents is to write more of the good acts of his/her child.

Then, the teacher may wish to ask parents to write down problems in their child’s behaviour and to divide them into two groups:

1. the problems a child can solve by himself/herself;
2. the problems which parents and child can solve together or with a teacher.

Then, the problems are discussed by the group of parents.

Other possible themes of group conversations can be:

- the encouragement and punishment of the child at home and at school;
- reactions of parents to the failures of their child.

The experience of adults education in the Faculty of Pedagogy at Vilnius College

A year ago, the Faculty of Pedagogy at Vilnius College began a project on the education of adults. The coordinator of this project is a sub-division of the Faculty: the Recourse Centre for the Development of Pedagogical Studies (RCAPS).

One of the objectives of this centre is the promotion of life-long learning among adults. RCAPS consults managers and pedagogues of educational institutions about the principles of democratic pedagogy, adult education, children’s culture and other current themes that concern the modification of educational processes. Teachers are consulted on how to work with families and how to find the best way to help families.

In the Faculty of Pedagogy at Vilnius College there are several study programmes about teachers’ training. In these programmes there are subjects who deal with children’s rights and protection (Principles of Law). As a matter of fact, all subjects concerning the fundamentals of children’s education are indirectly based on children’s rights. Also, students of this faculty are learning how to cooperate with parents. Students are trained on methods and forms of parental education within schools and kindergartens. The main methodology used for student training is project-based learning. Students learn not only about existing forms and methods of parents’ education, but also try to find new possibilities to improve parents’ education by analysing case studies, real problems which may occur in families.

New methods of parent’s education in teachers’ training studies

Currently, as a result of the participation of Lithuanian pedagogues and students in various international educational projects, new methods for the education of adults are emerging. A year



ago, the Finnish professor Jouni Piekkari visited the Faculty in the framework of the teacher training programme called “Drama in Education”. Students and lecturers participated in this project, that has as its main aim that of improving skills by using drama as an educational method.

This method of education is not traditional in many educational institutes. Only few teachers of schools and kindergartens dared to use it in the education of adults, but it is being used more and more often.

Hereafter we summarise some of the possibilities of using drama in education.

Drama-in-Education (DIE)

Drama-in-Education or simply drama refers to the use of drama as an educational tool. This methodology is most extensively developed in the British and Australian contexts. This form of drama is most often used in the school context to supplement the school curriculum. It can be used to learn through experience: most typically it can be used to learn such “dramatic” subjects like history, but it can as well be used to learn mathematics. In DIE the emphasis is in the process of exploring different topics through drama techniques. In contrast with conventional school drama, DIE often does not aim at creating polished performances for the audiences. Instead, the teachers or external facilitators try to offer through DIE “safe spaces to create meaning through pretence” in a learner-centred group process.

Forum theatre

Forum theatre is a form of interactive theatre. In forum theatre, a theatre group shows a social problem, or “oppression”, that is relevant to their audience, in a way that there seems to be no solution for the problem. Then the audience is invited to explore solutions for the problem through enacting these solutions on the scene. Forum theatre can also be a workshop technique, where a group explores through theatrical exercises individual social themes, problems and oppressions. Forum theatre has been used, for example, to tackle issues such as racism, drug abuse, sexual prejudice or bullying/school violence. Its main aim is the empowerment of individuals and groups, through “rehearsal for the reality”.

Theatre-for-Awareness / Theatre-for-Development

These forms of touring theatre have been used especially as a tool for participatory development programmes and awareness raising campaigns. Instead of telling people what they should know on education, or “enlighten” them, this form of theatre raises questions that the audiences have a chance to answer through facilitated post-performance discussions. The plays are based on a field research on a certain topic amongst the target groups, in order to find out which are the most essential developmental or social problems in that area. These theatre forms aim at a social change or completion of a concrete development programme, for example in the field of children’s rights.

Devised Theatre / From Fact to Fiction

Devised theatre refers to any theatre making process, where the starting point is not a written play text. Devised theatre is created through a democratic group process, where the group explores a chosen theme through movement, theatrical improvisations, visual techniques, videos etc. From Fact to Fiction is one form of devised theatre, where the starting point of the performance is a fact material on the theme: research, newspaper articles, interviews, TV programmes, internet etc. This material finds then its theatrical form through a creative group process.



Play Back Theatre

Play Back theatre is a form of interactive drama created in the United States. In a nutshell, the idea behind it is that participants tell real stories of their lives and then the actors re-act them on the stage through certain drama conventions. This is a form of sharing individual experiences in a community. It can be a truly healing experience or it can “just” create a feeling of community through a simple “being together”. Play back theatre is often done also in a workshop style without any actors, so that the participants themselves create a drama out of their stories through simple but effective dramatic techniques.

Sociodrama

It is a dramatic technique of analysing, understanding and learning about the different social phenomena of people’s everyday lives. The techniques are similar to many of the above mentioned techniques, emphasis being put on to the analytic understanding of social dynamics. Sociodrama is often used in training student and pedagogues.

3. PLANNING OF AD HOC TRAINING COURSES OR INFORMAL EDUCATION OF ADULTS/PARENTS ON ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

The theoretical-operational reference context

An introduction on the most recent changes in social policies

In order to define the objectives of non-formal training and educational measures in the framework of the promotion of active citizenship, it is useful to give a short overview of the most recent changes that have occurred in social policies, with a particular emphasis on the support to parenthood. The Italian legislative regulations that we will present are two laws: n° 285/1997 and n° 328/2000.

In more recent years we have witnessed the birth of some trends on the basis of which many European countries, including Italy, have redefined their social policy strategies. Ranci Ortigosa (2000) has extensively analysed these evolutionary trends in Italian social policies. Hereafter we include one of the author's tables.

Evolutionary trends of social policies in Italy

| | <i>Focus</i> | <i>Object</i> | <i>Target</i> | <i>Function</i> | <i>Approach</i> | <i>Actors</i> |
|-------------|-------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| Yrs '60-'70 | Aid to individual cases | Full-blown problem | Individual user | Cure and fact | Therapeutic | Individual professional competence |
| Yrs '80-'90 | Prevention | Risk | Group at risk | Promotion of responsibility and awareness | Educational | Service |
| Yrs '90-'00 | Promotion | Normal disadvantage | Sector of population | Activation | Consultancy Animation | Network |

Source: E. Ranci Ortigosa, Assistenza, prevenzione, promozione, in "Prospettive sociali e Sanitarie", n. 20/22, pp. 3-7

From the table we can infer that there has been a transformation, starting from the 60s, in the procedures and the aims of the interventions taken in the framework of social policies. As a matter of fact, the welfare and medical interventions, aimed at a specific target, have been superseded in the last 10 years by promotional and community interventions. This shift starts off from a change in paradigm, that has generated pragmatic effects in the area of social policies. These policies have initially developed within a healthcare paradigm¹, tracing objectives, methodologies and strategies

¹ With the term paradigm we refer to the idiom that was coined by Thomas Kuhn, i.e. "scientific paradigm" as a way of knowing whose assumptions are coherent and integrated (Kuhn, 1966)



that are typical of healthcare policies; they have then started to differentiate themselves from these last ones highlighting primary objectives and actions. If, therefore, initially the medical model was the reference model for the construction of social objectives and practices, in these latest years *welfare* policies have been trying to create a totally new operational model that could be primarily referable to their research object: i.e., people and the community, which are not the main research objects of the medical model².

This paradigmatic shift has therefore enabled the consideration of the community not as a “pool of users”, a community potentially at disadvantage that needs to be “cured”, but, under a new perspective, we now take into consideration the presence of numerous social actors that are capable of undertaking responsibilities with regard to the problems of the community and of its members. Next to forms of mutuality and solidarity as a model of relations between members and citizens of a community, we are witnessing the development of interventions that promote active citizenship. This interest towards people, the community and, in particular, towards the local community has been creating and developing in time a trend towards the trial of new paths, new models of social work, that are based on networks (Martini - Sequi, 1995). Among these models we can find the support to parenthood in its more common practices, such as the so-called informal education.

Within such institutional context, the interventions that are addressed to parenthood acquire peculiar features: from interventions addressed to the cure or the restructuring of disadvantaged family situations we have changed to actions of prevention of future disadvantaged family situations and in the 90s we have witnessed the development of intervention policies for the support of families, in particular the support to parenthood, thus recognising its resources and competences and addressing the intervention towards the creation of contexts in which families can find support. A *welfare* scenario has been opening up, in which actions and trials, inside and outside statutory services, are address to the “normal” family, i.e. the family that doesn’t indicate specific needs or. Some good examples can be found in the Family Centres, that have as a main aim the development of collaborative relations with the community of reference; or in the Children-Parents Centres that are part of the new types of services to children and that have as a main aim the support of parents-children relationship; the Centres for Family Mediation, that offer a method for building contexts in which parents themselves regain possession of the decisional competencies with regard to their own family issues, during that particular phase in which they are separating from their spouses and have to therefore support their children; finally, among others, the interventions for informal education and training for adults as a path for parents that wish to have a room for reflection, support and group learning with regards to those themes that are connected to their parental role (Paola Di Nicola, 2002).

The perspective from which we look at the family and at parenthood has radically changed: if on the one hand, in the “old” way, we work in order to identify the disadvantage and, as a consequence, to cure it and prevent it by thinking to the community as users and to healthcare institutes as organisations that can identify the cause of the disadvantage, take care of it and give it back “cured” to the community, on the other hand, in the emerging model, we work in order to identify the resources of the community, to activate contexts in which the community can be a protagonist and can take care itself of its own resources and possible difficulties. The change of

² The medical model, that has been used illegitimately in disciplines that differ from medicine, has amongst its assumptions: 1) the reference to “pathological or abnormal” events, that have a cause (always traceable, both in the organism and in mechanisms of a social nature), a course, an outcome and that are implied in mankind, and are therefore *culture free*; 2) the necessity to restore normality through a procedure of “cure” (social intervention) targeted at the people who are involved in this event and steered by experts with a specific training and education (Fiora-Pedrabissi- Salvini, 1981).



paradigmatic perspective implies the shift from “offering” healthcare services for potential users to generate and build contexts for the promotion of the community welfare.

Definition of the objectives of the conducting role and of the informal training and educational path for adults and parents

Starting from the thoughts around the paradigm of reference of any psychosocial intervention, we consider it necessary to for the efficiency and the effectiveness of the practice to identify the objectives of the role.

If we need to practice within a science of healing the objectives of the conducting role, the scenario will take the shape of an expert that has to cure situations that are considered abnormal or pathologic. His/her intervention will therefore be direct and directive, because only an expert can cure what or who is considered to be “ill”.

On the other hand, if, as we have been saying in this chapter, the science to which the informal educational or training intervention belongs is a science of change, the objectives for the role of the conductor will be those of assisting a group of people in shifting their point of view. This shift (Turchi G., 1995-1998) takes the shape of a transition for parents from a personal and peculiar path to a path to share with other parents, a path in which everyone brings his/her own identity with regard to family strategies, in the choice of family values, but putting in common at the same time an objective that is common to all parents: managing the education of their children in the primary interest of the children themselves.

Thus, the non-formal educational or training measure takes the shape of an *integrated path* in which parents can have an occasion to exchange experiences and knowledge with regard the relationship with their children, with the assistance of a conductor that, by proposing different paths, offers the possibility to build a new and shared point of view on family relations and on the education of children.

Paul Durning (1995; 2000) has proposed his own definition of family education, stressing that it takes the shape of “*the action to educate one or more children that is often realised in family groups by adults that are the parents of those children*”, thus identifying in parents the protagonists of the path and not the users.

It is therefore a path of reflection and discussion, more that a series of “meeting with the expert”, aimed at valorising and support the educational duties of those parents that wish to participate in such initiatives, rather than a series of lectures to offer solutions to questions that are defined as “problematic”.

The groups of parents, together with the conductor, undertake an ongoing path where the experiences expressed by the parents become an element to work on together in order to draft a common narrative scheme that could generate a group culture shared by the participants. In this sense the group itself takes the shape of “living matter” that can generate knowledge and culture; since we are not talking about lectures on a certain theme, therefore, the aim of the group animator is not to offer solutions as an expert of education or development psychology, but to urge the group to reason in terms of feasible strategies with regard to any kind o situation that is presented by one of more members (Catarsi E., 2002, 2003).

In particular, in the development of a non-formal training or educational measure for parents, we establish the following objectives:

1. to describe and share the main themes regarding the relation with children;
2. to define “new” strategic ways to relate with children.

These objectives, have been established from the need to make sure that the meetings wouldn't take the shape of “reports” done by an expert, but would be structured as a way for parents to share their personal experiences with their children.



Therefore, in this context, the expert takes the role of the group conductor or animator, in order to facilitate the interactive processes between the participants and to conduct the discussion. The conductor manages the thread of the argument, while the parents, in a creative way, share and exchange new educational strategies and actions in order to manage those educational situations that have been defined as critical.

In terms of project, and with regards to the above mentioned objectives, we can identify some indicators of the effectiveness of the path, i.e. a) the acquisition, by the participants to the training course, of the ability to anticipate critical situations in the relation with children; b) the acquisition of a way of considering the relation with one's own child that could lead to the identification of effective management strategies of the various situations that can come up in family education and, more indirectly, c) the creation of forms of reciprocal support in the shape of spontaneous groups of mutual help, outside the official meetings.

These indicators can be evaluated each time during the meetings by asking to the parents to describe or tell their own family situations where they have actually applied the contributions that had emerged at the end of previous meetings. In turn, the descriptions offered can become subjects of discussion for the whole group; in this way, the group can build its own history, meeting after meeting, and can become a point of reference for individual parents also after the end of the informal educational measure

Thus, the animator becomes a figure that directs a path in which the protagonists are the parents themselves: a direction made up of 8 meetings in order to create an opportunity to exchange views but also practical information. An occasion that in its objectives has that of putting the animator aside in order for the parents to be able to take advantage, once the educational measure is completed, of the other occasions, inside or outside the school, official or informal, to meet and exchange experiences.

The assets of a non-formal education path with a group of parents of children in early ages: an example

Summary of a learning path in terms of set objectives and proposed activities:

| N° meeting/seminar | The objectives | The activities |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| 1° | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To know oneself in his/her parental role ➤ Presentation of the objectives of the educational path ➤ Construction of the themes as steps of the path | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Presentation of path ➤ Working groups on the critical aspects of the parents-children relation ➤ Plenary discussion of the findings of the working groups |
| 2° | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To build a shared reality from where to observe the phenomena | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Individual work on the differences in the relation mother-children/father-children ➤ Plenary discussion of the findings of the individual work |

| | | |
|------------------|---|--|
| <p>3°</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To build a shared reality from where to observe the phenomena | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Individual work on the differences in the role of parents and the role of child with respect to one's own parents in the past and present times ➤ Plenary discussion of the findings |
| <p>4°</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To build a shared reality from where to observe the phenomena | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ One parent presents his/her example of a critical situation in the relation with his/her own child: the moment to take a bath ➤ Plenary discussion to analyse the case and support the parent |
| <p>5°</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To build a shared reality from where to observe the phenomena | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ One parent presents his/her example of a critical situation in the relation with his/her own child: how to subtract the dummy ➤ Plenary discussion to analyse the case and support the parent |
| <p>6°</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To build a shared reality from where to observe the phenomena | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ One parent presents his/her example of a critical situation in the relation with his/her own child: the moment in which the child is taken away from his/her mother and goes to nursery school ➤ Plenary discussion to analyse the case and support the parent ➤ |
| <p>7°</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To build a shared reality from where to observe the phenomena | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ripresa di tutti i casi discussi insieme per poter valutare l'efficacia delle strategie inventate insieme ➤ Thoughts on what has emerged |
| | | |



| | | |
|-----------|---|---|
| <p>8°</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Collective evaluation on the shared path ➤ To build a shared reality from where to observe the phenomena | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Going over all steps of the path through the assets of the group: the board with loose sheets ➤ Thoughts on what has emerged ➤ Individual questionnaire to be handed in to the group animator |
|-----------|---|---|

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4. ROLE AND FUNCTIONING OF THE SOCIAL ECONOMY IN EXERCISING ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND SELECTION OF CASE STUDIES

Role and functioning of the social economy in exercising active citizenship

What is active citizenship?

The concept of citizenship is polysemic and contested. In other words, it has multiple contexts and meanings and leads to discussion.

The Council of Europe adopted therefore a multidimensional approach to citizenship. It also defined citizenship as being primarily a co-citizen, somebody who lives with others on the basis of rights and responsibilities.

It differentiates between:

- citizenship as status: it corresponds to the legal contract between a State and an individual, including nationality; it defines the individual as a subject of rights; it includes the rights and liberties granted by a State and the duties and responsibilities of the individual.

And

- citizenship as social role: it includes issues of identity, the sense of belonging and inclusiveness; it dissociates citizenship from a particular State; it is context-related depending on the community it refers to (local, regional, European, global); it focuses on inter-relations, on the co-citizen.

The various dimensions of citizenship are

- a political dimension – participation in the decision-making process and exercise of political power;
- a legal dimension – respecting the rule of law; being aware of and exercising citizens' rights and responsibilities;
- a cultural dimension – respect for diversity, fundamental democratic values, both a shared and divergent history and heritage, and contributing to peaceful intercultural relations;
- a social and economic dimension – in particular, the fight against poverty and exclusion, considering new forms of work and community development, and corporate social responsibility;
- a European dimension – being aware of the unity and diversity of European culture, learning to live in a European context, knowing about European institutions and European rights;
- a global dimension – recognising and promoting global interdependence and solidarity³.

Citizenship is also understood as a factor of social cohesion. The Council of Europe sees it as a key element in “the notion of a new social contract, whereby social cohesion is based on fundamental criteria other than homogeneity: these are empowerment, civic participation and shared responsibility.”⁴

³ Council of Europe draft common guidelines on EDC adopted by the Ministers of Education, Cracow, October 2000

⁴ Council of Europe 1997-2001 EDC project final reports



Taking into account this framework, active citizenship is about revitalising democratic public life of taking opportunities to become actively involved in defining and tackling the problems of its own communities and in improving its own quality of life. It is about the development of informed citizens who are also caring, responsible and engaged, and have critical thinking skills.

What is social economy?

The term social economy refers to a broad category of organisations: cooperatives, mutuals and voluntary organisations, associations and foundations that engage in economic activity with a social remit. Given the range of organisations, social economy cannot be defined in traditional terms. The term social economy is French in origin (*économie sociale*) and it aims to distinguish this group of organisations from public authorities and private enterprise with an exclusively profit-making objective.

Social economy includes, for example, building societies, charity trading arms, consumer retail societies, community businesses, credit unions, fair trade companies, housing associations, intermediate labour market companies, local exchange trading schemes, marketing cooperatives, social businesses, social firms, time banks, voluntary enterprises, workers' cooperatives, etc.

It becomes obvious then that we are dealing with a wide range of organisations with different size and structure, engaged in various types of economic activity at different geographical levels.

The nature of the economic goods and services produced is not the key defining feature of the social economy, rather 'such enterprises belong to the sector because of their purposes and the way they organise and manage their activities'.

The broad range of organisational forms means that across the social economy we will find a variety of different relationships such as workers, volunteers, trustees, members, users, customers, funders, contractors and the wider community. For example, workers' cooperatives engage a different group of stakeholders in different ways than voluntary enterprises and community businesses.

Social economy is apparently the fastest growing sector in Europe. The two areas where there appears to be most growth are economic integration (in particular training) and provision of social and health care services. Other new niches such as environmental improvement are also playing organisations make a significant contribution to the national economy.

The European Union defines social economy according to the following criteria:

- The object of providing services to members or the community;
- The primacy of people over capital;
- Democratic functioning;
- Management system which is independent of the public authorities.

Role and functioning of the Social Economy in exercising active citizenship

There are at least two ways that we can think about the relationship between active citizenship and the social economy. The first is a familiar argument from within democratic theory about the developmental effect of associations: they offer a highly conducive environment within which to cultivate the knowledge, attitudes and skills that are essential to practice active citizenship.



Participation in the social economy helps to prepare individuals to be active citizens.

A second argument is also relevant. Rather than seeing citizenship as something practised in another location, for instance the public sphere, the social economy can also be viewed as an arena in which citizenship is expressed and practised in its own right.

There are two broad characteristics of social economy organisations that are of particular interest when considering the nurturing and expression of active citizenship: ethos and structure. These two characteristics also provide further clarification of the differences between the social economy and capitalist for-profit private corporations and public sector bureaucracies.

Ethos

The ethos of the social economy orientates organisations towards mutual, communal or general interests. Social economy organisations engage in productive activities, but the generation of profit is secondary to their explicitly social aims, a stark comparison with capitalistic firms. Any profit and surplus is distributed according to different principles than shareholding. A significant portion of the social economy interprets social aims in explicitly civil terms.

The majority of social economy organisations view themselves as primarily engaged in responding to the unmet social needs, tackling socio-economic injustices, and poverty alleviation. In many cases the social economy is active in areas of deprivation where capital has fled and employment opportunities are few. But whatever their specific mission, the mutual, common or general interest that is fundamental to the ethos of social economy organisations is surely fertile ground for the recognition of the need and the development of informed citizens who are also caring, responsible and engaged.

Structure

The democratic structure of social economy organisations provides a further distinguishing feature in comparison to capitalist corporations and public bureaucracies. This leads to unusual patterns of the political division of labour and in the relationship between power and authority. These patterns vary according to the type of organisation we are considering – cooperative, mutual or voluntary association – and the size of the organisation. So, for example, both the participants and the expression of the democratic principle in small scale workers' cooperatives are obvious – one member, one vote – when compared to voluntary enterprises that may offer different forms of participation rights to different categories of stakeholders including trustees, workers, volunteers, members, users, funders, wider community, etc. The form of participation will also be dependent on the size of the organisation. Whereas smaller organisations may facilitate direct participation by all stakeholders, larger organisations will have a different division of labour that is likely to be based on the representative principle or where direct participation is nothing more than occasional votes for trustees or directors. Whatever the actual form, social economy offers a number of interesting institutional designs within which different forms of participation can be practised.



Selection of case studies

We gathered hereafter three different samples of how social economy can answer unmatched needs in the field of family policies while fostering active citizenship:

- “Dame Catherine’s School”, a parent cooperative school in Ticknall, United Kingdom;
- The Italian association of parents “Associazione Italiana Genitori”; and
- The French association of parents and professionals “ACEPP – Associations des Collectifs Enfants Parents Professionnels”.

Dame Catherine’s School, a parent cooperative school in Ticknall, United Kingdom

Dame Catherine’s School is a primary school that was founded in 1744. It became a parent cooperative in 1987 when a group of parents took it over after the Local Education Authority decided to close it. One-third of its funding comes from a store that parents run on a volunteer basis, and another third comes from fundraising. The last third is contributed anonymously by parents, after they are told the average amount that is required per child. In 1993, the school formed a secondary school, called Flexicollege, which is comprised of groups of fifteen children, each with a tutor- animator.

Flexicollege has three main elements to the curriculum:

- For 25% of their time the students run a business and this is the context for gaining GCSEs (General Certificate of Secondary Education) in Design Technology, Business Studies and British Industrial Society and Information Technology. The nature of the business is to run a magazine for the local community.
- Another 25% of the time is spent on expressive arts, out of which the students will derive two GCSEs - in Expressive Arts and in Art.
- For 50% of the time the students are doing study based around GCSE courses which are provided by the National Extension College - these are supported and tutored by the generic tutor of the group and he or she will bring in experts at the required stages.

The school has its own permanent study base and the students are able to go out to other facilities like leisure centres, art studios of community arts groups, public libraries, and a small laboratory which the parents have built in an old Victorian reading room in Derby. Very strong links with the world of business are developed and the constitution foresees the existence of a Work Education Council supporting the students in their development towards employment. The main aim is to develop a highly flexible arrangement built on the experience of the original Dame Catherine's School for four to eleven-year olds where the children are taught to learn how to learn and to manage their own learning, rather than how to be taught.

The school benefits a great deal from the educational support it receives from an educational research and publishing company, Education Now. Run by a group of 35 associate directors and a core of permanent directors, Education Now publishes special releases on aspects of education like learner-managed learning, small schools, democratic schooling, and so on, and aims to stimulate and inform educational debate through conferences, courses, consultancy and research.

From time to time the school holds open days when, at a small cost, those interested in the project are able to go round the school and to engage in seminars about the project.



The Italian association of parents “Associazione Italiana Genitori”

A.Ge. is a federation of local associations of parents, governed by an Administrative Council and an Executive Committee. Elections on a national basis are held every three years. If there are no local associations, single parents or families can become members of the national federation.

To become members, the local associations or the individuals must accept the A.Ge. constitution and in particular article 4) that declares A.Ge. independent from religious or political movements, operating on a non-profit basis in observance of the values stated in the Italian Constitution, in the Universal Declarations of human rights and of children rights and of the Christian ethics.

Local associations are organised around provincial and regional councils.

A.Ge. is a member of some Italian governmental commissions and of international institutions like the World Family Organisation, COFACE and EPA.

A.Ge. operates at local and national levels for the Parents, the Family, the School and the Society. Its aims are the training and motivation of parents in their duty as educators, the solicitation of official bodies (schools; local and national administrations) for the recognition of the primary responsibility of parents and their associations, the information to the public opinion for the recognition of the needs, rights and duties of parents and children, and cultural research in its field of action.

Practical activities :

Since 1995, A.Ge has instituted an international television award " A.GE CHIARA D'ASSISI " for those television programs most suitable to the education of children and that help parents in their educational duties with the objective to establish a partnership with media organisations and channels that are considered to have strong educational influence.



The French association of parents and professionals “ACEPP – Associations des collectifs Enfants Parents Professionnels”.

ACEPP, a non profit making association (1901 law), created in 1980, gathers approximately a thousand of local initiatives, mainly carried by parents and focused on the creation of facilities for young children, both on urban and rural areas.

The goals of ACEPP is to animate and develop an educational, parental movement: communication among families, in particular for setting actions contributing to the improvement of local life, the development of collective local initiatives, the insertion of women and young people, solidarity among families, the fight against exclusions.

Actions and fields of activities:

In order to support the development of parental initiatives, ACEPP puts in action three main programmes:

- a programme of development of facilities for young children with parental participation in the underprivileged urban districts, thus supporting the fight against exclusion through cultural mediation;
- a programme of development of rural areas, which supports the participation of inhabitants in local projects, based on the specific elements of the culture of each site and on the family-childhood policy;
- a lifelong learning programme for the early childhood professionals and labour insertion and qualification tools for unskilled young people who wish to professionalise themselves in the field of early childhood.

The ACEPP resource centre, established in 1996, constitutes an interface for the capitalisation and diffusion of the several experiments and actions implemented by the network.

The review of ACEPP "the gazette" (bi-monthly) diffuses studies and video cassettes having as a main topic the early childhood, ethno-development, the participative local development, the creation of services and the local cultural identity.



CHAPTER 5: LOCAL TERRITORIAL NETWORKS ON THE PROMOTION OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

www.unicef.it

UNICEF, the United Nation's Children Fund, is a UN Agency that was founded in 1946 to help those children victims of II World War. In the period 1946-1953 it provided food, clothing and health to children in various European countries, and also in Italy. Today, the United Nation's Children Fund operates in 158 countries around the world, where over 2 billion children and young people under 15 live, through long-term development programmes in the fields of health care, water supplies, education and assistance to mothers, as well as through emergency programmes, in order to defend children from the consequences of wars and other disasters.

<http://www.minori.it/>

The National Research Centre for Childhood and Adolescence was established in 1997 and acts as a supporting agency to the [Childhood National Observatory](#). The Observatory has a general promotional and initiation role for Children's and Minors' Policies. Every two year, the Observatory draft an Action Plan for the Government that sets the strategies and the interventions of the Italian Government in favour of children and young people, as well as a Report on the conditions of children and young people in Italy. Every five years, it is responsible for drafting the Italian Government's Report to the UN on the implementation of the 1989 International Convention on Children's Rights.

The main activities of the National Research Centre for Childhood and Adolescence are: **A – Maintenance and Development of the Research Centre on the Conditions of Minors in Italy; B - Analysis of problems related to minors and young people; C – Distribution of Documents and Reports; D – Drafting of proposals for pilot and research projects on the consequences introduced in the sector by new rules and regulations.**

www.azzurro.it

TELEFONO AZZURRO is an association active in the field of prevention and cure of situations of disadvantage for children, also through the involvement of communities, at National, European and International level. Telefono Azzurro Onlus is also a National Permanent Observatory for Childhood in Italy, and it publishes an Annual Report on the Condition of Italian Children and Minors, in collaboration with the Statistical Agency "Eurispes".

www.each-for-sick-children.org

EACH - European Association for Children in Hospital - is the umbrella organisation for member associations involved in the welfare of all children before, during or after a hospital stay. Presently, 18 associations from sixteen European countries and from Japan are members of EACH.

The Italian member is "A.B.I.O. – Associazione per il Bambino in Ospedale", Via Bessarione 27, I-20139 Milano.



www.connect-to-hope.org

The European Hospital Pedagogues Association aims to:

- establish the right for hospitalised children to education according to their individual needs in a suitable environment. To ensure this education for the sick child convalescing at home;
- work towards the implementation of the European Charter for the rights of the hospitalised children (Leyden - 13th May 1988);
- promote the development of teaching in hospitals and encourage liaison with other professionals, particularly those working in hospitals;
- represent and communicate the views and professional interests of teachers in hospitals;
- promote and encourage research in all aspects of hospital teaching and publicise examples of good practice;
- disseminate information through regular newsletters, thus making all European colleagues aware of our work, meetings and study days of the association and its members. (It is not the aim of the association to interfere or compete with the responsibilities of other professional organisations to which a teacher may belong).

www.age.it

A.Ge. - Associazione Italiana Genitori, was founded in 1968 and is the National Federation of Parents' Associations. The local A.Ge. associations are run by volunteer groups of parents that intend to participate to the school and social life of their children with the aim to render families a political actor. The local A.Ge. associations are in turn connected in provincial and regional delegations and are federated in the national Association. Each Association is made up of volunteers that promote a solidaristic network among parents and participate to the territorial activities, starting with schools. Therefore, the local A.Ge. association is responsible for the contacts with schools, parishes, the Municipality, radios and local newspapers; at provincial and regional levels the contacts take place with Local Authorities, the territorial school authorities and public opinion. At national level, A.Ge represents the needs of families to the political and administrative authorities (Parliament's Committees, Ministries etc.)

PROJECTS PROMOTED BY AGE:

PROJECT CEAS (Cittadinanza Attiva Europea e Solidale)

www.progettoceas.it

The objective of the project is to support and valorise exchanges of ideas and best practice between those who have the task to educate new generations within the national educational systems and those who directly work in the field of solidarity and charity.

Promoters and funders are the MIUR (Ministry for Education, University and Research), the Ministry of Welfare, INDIRE and the Permanent Forum of the Third Sector.

PROJECT ANDREA

A.Ge. has been running for several years now a project in Italian hospitals, called "*Progetto Andrea*" with the aim to improve the quality of the services directed to hospitalised children and to render them more human.



PROJECT PASSAPAROLE DI PACE (SEDE AGE DI FIRENZE)

<http://www.age.it/index.php?module=subjects&func=viewpage&pageid=47>

The project stems from an in-depth research on the role that nowadays schools and other educational agencies have to take on, given the present historical and socio-cultural moment, where ethical and moral values seem to be criticised and substituted by behaviours (mostly publicised by the media) that lead young people in particular to abandon the correct and responsible pattern of living.

The project aims at make the voice of young Italians heard with regards to the theme of Peace, as a funding principle of a new world order, founded on cooperation, development, solidarity, social justice.

The project involves groups of young people and schools, thus enhancing improvisation and free interpretation of the individuals that will take part in the organisation and implementation of the activities. Several forms of expression can be chosen.

www.aibi.it

The Association “Amici dei Bambini” is an International Humanitarian Organisation for the protection of children’s rights. The association’s aims and objectives are expressed by the following fields of action:

- International Cooperation and education to development:

Organisation, promotion and management of projects of decentralised cooperation, in favour of minors from development countries and emergency areas, aimed at preventing mothers from abandoning their children and at supporting families in raising their children in the best way.

The projects of Amici dei Bambini are financed by the [Long Distance Funding](#).

Planning, organisation and management of activities and initiatives aimed of awareness raising, information and training on international solidaristic development.

- International Adoption:

Organisation of information, awareness raising and training activities for parents to-be and management of the procedures for international adoption.

- Promotion of Children’s Rights:

Organisation of conferences, seminars, debates and publishing of a newsletter "[Il Foglio dell’Ai.Bi.](#)" and other publications on the problems faced by children at disadvantage and at risk.

www.guidagenitori.it

GuidaGenitori.it was born in March 1999 under the initiative of Rosalba Trabalzini – mother of two, psychologist, psychoterapist – that has united around the original project a group of parents, with the aim to use the potential of Internet to create a “virtual square” where parents could exchange information, suggestions, advice. Doctors, psychologists, and communication experts have worked together to implement a website through which parents (whose job is getting more and more difficult under the present ways and rhythms of life) can easily share professional knowledge and family experiences.



www.istitutodegliinnocenti.it

The Istituto degli Innocenti of Florence has been active for over six centuries in favour of families and children. When it was founded, in the first half of the XV century, it was the first organisation in the world that was exclusively dedicated to the assistance of children. Today the Istituto degli Innocenti is a centre with diversified services and activities: refuges for minors and for pregnant women and mothers in difficulty; nurseries and educational services; research, information and training centre on childhood, adolescence, family.

PROJECTS PROMOTED BY ISTITUTO DEGLI INNOCENTI

<http://www.cittasostenibili.minori.it/>

Since the year 2000, half of the world population has been living in cities. Young people make up for almost a third of the world population and the objective to create sustainable cities, to improve living conditions of citizens, nowadays includes also the need for quality environmental indicators and active participation of children and young people themselves. At national level, the Ministry for Environment has promoted the project “Sustainable cities for young boys and girls”. In turn, local and national Associations that work on the theme childhood-territory-participation, have given their contribution with initiatives, campaigns, educational and experimental courses for the development of a new approach to childhood and cities.

PROFESSIONALS THAT ARE ACTIVE ON THE THEMES OF URBAN SUSTAINABILITY FOR CHILDHOOD:

Laboratorio Donne Ambiente

<http://www.cittasostenibili.minori.it/formazio/consulenza/donneamb.htm>

The Laboratorio Donne Ambiente is a company supplying services and consultancy for the realisation of actions and activities in favour of sustainable cities and cities that are suitable for children. It's a company made up of women only. The architects of Laboratorio Donne Ambiente have been working since 1994 on urban and environmental sustainability under the children point of view.

A B Città

<http://www.cittasostenibili.minori.it/formazio/consulenza/abc.htm>

A B Città is a social cooperative whose associates are a group of experts with expertise in several disciplines related to social and human sciences: urban ecology, organisation and management of complex systems, urban planning, psychopedagogy and the culture of childhood and adolescence. These experts have been working for many years at local, national and international levels with Organisations, Institutes, Public and Private Agencies on the planning and implementation of innovative programmes that would combine the promotion of the well-being and the rights of children, young people and citizens, with the development of more welcoming and sustainable urban environments.



Centro Studi Anfione

<http://www.cittasostenibili.minori.it/formazio/consulenza/anfione.htm>

Laboratory for planning and consultancy on projects related to active citizenship.

Cultural Association Fiabe d'estate

<http://www.cittasostenibili.minori.it/formazio/consulenza/fiabe.htm>

Since 1982 "Fiabe d'estate" has organised 1792 theatre shows in 35 municipalities and over 800 shows in environmental events of 12 cities, through tailored projects.

The association has given work to hundreds of unemployed young people, through the organisation of creative classes on animation and story-telling, with the aim to give local street workers instruments that they could use independently in their own territories, with all respect for dialect and slang, local traditions and cultural heritage. This training course has the aim to develop innate theatricality through games (make-up, disguise, dramatisation, dance, mime....) in order to create and socialise by means of collectively interpreting the tale.

Studio Urbafor

<http://www.cittasostenibili.minori.it/formazio/consulenza/urbafor.htm>

Research Centre for Local Authorities.

Coop. Grado 16

<http://www.cittasostenibili.minori.it/formazio/consulenza/grado16b.htm>

The social cooperative Grado 16 was born in 1994 thanks to a group of social workers with diverse expertise: street workers, psychologists, psychosociologists, trainers and community consultants. The cooperative has today 11 associates and 12 employees.

The cooperative's work aims at favouring the development of territorial communities by promoting and sustaining interaction with and between different social actors, through planning and management of services; research; social, economic and cultural promotion and community development.

www.peter-pan.org and www.lafattoriadeibambini.org (Action Group for the protection of children's right and laboratory for environmental education)

The Association for social promotion "*L'Isola di Peter Pan*" is an association promoting the environment and social solidarity, with the aim to disseminate and reinforce the concept of "ecology of day-to-day life", i.e. the project of a change in our day-to-day life in a more ecologic, natural and solidaristic way.

<http://www.genitoridemocratici.it/home.htm>

The Coordinamento Genitori Democratici (CGD) is a national association that promotes within families, school and society the full right of children, adolescents and young people to be considered persons, to grow up in complete independence, health, dignity, as well as promoting a new culture of childhood and adolescence.



The Coordinamento Genitori Democratici has chosen school as its main place of activity, through groups of parents of school children.

www.portalefamiglie.it

Portal realised under the initiative of the Centro pastorale Familiare of Verona and of the Piccole Suore della Sacra Famiglia. The portal is a space not “for” but “of” families, run by those who run training courses (both spiritual and human) and that want to network with other learners. The group of people managing the website is made up of professionals who are interested in the world of families and of around 20 contributors.

<http://www.romacivica.net/girotondo/principale.html>

GIROTONDO – ITALIAN ASSOCIATION FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Girotondo was born thanks to a group of private citizens that promoted an initiative with the aim to make a series of requests to Local Authorities on the subject of the promotion of children's rights, a theme that is often neglected by LAs.

www.cisf.it

The **Centro Internazionale Studi Famiglia (International Centre for Family Studies)** aims at promoting a family culture, taking into account old values and new developments in society.

To do so, the Centre uses the following means:

- an electronic **Research Centre** specialised on family issues;
- a **Scientific Committee** composed by experts in various areas of study, that gives assistance the Direction of CISF in the annual planning of activities and in the preparation of conferences, seminars, meetings, publications;
- the publication of a biennial **Report of the situation of families in Italy**, compiled by experts in various areas of study and oriented towards the problems that families have to face *vis-à-vis* the socio-cultural environment in which they live;
- the **promotion of scientific research** on themes that concern family life;
- the publication of **studies** that are in particular oriented to the historical condition of the family and to the definition of its specific roles in the contemporary society;
- political debate, through scientific or information **seminars and conferences**;
- the collaboration with the magazine **Famiglia Oggi** (Family Today), a monthly magazine geared towards the interests and needs of social professionals and the clergy.

<http://www.osservatorionazionalefamiglie.it/>

The National Observatory on the Family was founded by agreement between the [Ministry of Labour and Welfare](#) and the [Municipality of Bologna](#). The International Year of the Family (proclaimed by the UN General Assembly 10 years after the previous one) has been officially opened in Italy precisely with the inauguration of the National Observatory on the Family, on 27 January 2004.



This new organisation is composed of a Scientific Coordinating Committee, supported by experts and representatives of Regional and Local Authorities, Institutes and Associations, representing 25 Italian Municipalities.

<http://www.famgliainsieme.it/>

“...we are a group of families from Bologna. We do care about our families and we would like to get to know better, exchange ideas, get trained, acquire a better sensitivity to family problems, as we are deeply convinced that the family is at the origins of every human and social growth.

Since December 1998 we promote initiatives for self-training, informal monthly meetings on a specific subject. Depending on the subject of the meeting (morality, psychology, etc...), qualified experts may be invited to attend.

We meet up once a month (every third Sunday of the month at present) in the afternoon, depending on our children's timetable, in the Parish of S. Pietro nella Metropolitana (Bologna)..."

<http://www.forumfamiglie.org/index.htm>

The Forum aims at:

-promoting and safeguarding the values and the rights of the family as a "natural society funded on marriage" (Italian Constitution, 27 Dec. 1947, articles 29, 30, 31)

-return to the family its right to citizenship so that it can occupy in the Italian political life the place that it deserves as a social actor to be promoted and not as a weak actor to be given assistance to.

At present, 28 associations are members of the Forum

(<http://www.forumfamiglie.org/forumroot/associazioni/associazioni.html>)

<http://www.sindacatodellefamiglie.org/>

It is an organisation that was born in 1982 to proclaim the forgotten rights, the inalienable obligations, as well as the irreplaceable function that the family is called to perform in a society at risk of becoming more and more impersonal and standardised. Funded by the simple friendship of some fathers and mothers, the Family's Union has today become a strong actor and a counterpart for the State in its work in defence of incomes of the families and for the public and private television channels in its mission to guarantee quality programmes for children.

<http://www.anfaa.it/>

The ANFAA - Associazione Nazionale Famiglie Adottive e Affidatarie (National Association of Adoptive and Custodian Families), was founded in December 1962.

Since then, ANFAA has always aimed at protecting those children and minors that have lost – temporarily or forever – their biological families, by promoting in the first place actions to guarantee the necessary social and assistance services for the families of origin.

ANFAA's activity has been vital for the approval of the rules that at present regulate the adoption and custody of minors; first the 1967 law on special adoption and then the 1983 law on adoption and custody, which is considered one of the most advanced in the world.



Today in Italy several sections of the association are active and there are dozens of groups and associations of adoptive and custodian families with which ANFAA is in touch and that adhere to and carry out the association's mission.

In order to spread into society a new culture based on the assumption that minors are autonomous individuals with specific rights that the State has to protect, ANFAA has promoted through the years the development of dozens and dozens of seminars and conferences, at local, national and international levels, both by organising these meetings itself and by encouraging other organisations to organise and promote such activities.

www.saugus-vaikas.lt

A centre, based in the city of Kaunas, for the prevention and treatment of child abuse. The Secure Child Centre was founded by the Open Society Fund-Lithuania and Kaunas County Administration and registered in 28.12.1999 as a public non-profit institution.

Having a vision of secure child who expresses his/her potential in a caring and loving environment, the organisation's goal is the prevention and cure of child abuse and other child crises through implementing multidisciplinary services for children and families, educating professionals, adults and children in the community.

The centre's activities are: Prevention and intervention of child abuse, Mental health education in Kaunas children's homes, Ensuring safety of children in the community, Enhancing the psycho-social resiliency through safety skills training and Introducing the rehabilitation-oriented approach to the probation of juvenile offenders in Kaunas County.

www.tinklas.lt

www.tinklas.lt is the first independent portal devoted to the wide educational society (created September 29th, 1996).

The aims of the educational portal are:

- To give an opportunity to as many people as possible to access information about education;
- To present teaching and learning sources as well as educational innovations;
- To unite members of the educational society and urge them to co-operate.

www.lygus.lt/mic

The Women's Issues Information Centre (WIIC) was established in April 1996, after the completion of activities by the Secretariat of the Lithuanian Preparatory Committee for the UN Fourth World Conference on Women. The Centre assists in implementing the Action Plan of Advancement of Women of Lithuania. The WIIC is a registered non-governmental organisation and is supported by the United Nations Development Programme in Lithuania. The need for WIIC arose out of responses that there was no single organisation to act as an umbrella organisation to collate and represent women's issues in a coordinated and sustained manner. The Centre works in partnership with other women's NGOs, governmental and international agencies in order to develop a gender perspective on all aspects of women's lives and ensure that women's perspective is represented in developmental programmes, as well as in the policies and legislative social and welfare reforms. Its main aim is that of promoting gender awareness, educating and providing information. WIIC plays a key role in ensuring that women's issues remain at the forefront of political, social and economical changes in which women become 'visible'.



The Centre has an extensive network of contacts with women's organisations, women's NGO's within Lithuania, its Baltic's neighbours, and some Eastern European countries highlighting problems on abuses and problems of women, to present a united front, share strategies on intervention, organise joint conferences and campaigns, disseminate and share information, etc. The Centre initiates research studies and conducts statistical surveys. Over the last two years it has found the problem of domestic violence to be particularly acute in Lithuania society and has therefore published material that analyses why violence is so predominate against women within the familial domain.

www.spa.lt

The Family Planning and Sexual Health Association is the only non-governmental organisation in Lithuania that takes care of sexual and reproductive rights and the health of the community and especially of young people.

The Association was founded in 1995 and it unites more than 200 members of different specialities: physicians, pedagogues, psychologists, journalists, etc.

The Association is seeking that families in Lithuania would be healthy and happy, that babies would be expected, healthy, and be loved; is promoting awareness of the community of family planning, sexual and reproductive health; is seeking that the number of abortions in the country would be as low as possible; is defending the rights of people and families to the necessary information in order to consciously and freely choose the most suitable contraception; is seeking that both men and women, and especially young people would be healthy, would know how to protect themselves against unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, would know how to use and would use the up-to-date contraception means; is taking care that the sexual education of youths would be efficient.

The Association organises lectures, seminars, courses, conferences; publishes written and visual information material; prepares projects and programmes; organises and attends national and international conferences.

The Family Planning and Sexual Health Association in Lithuania is a member of the International Planned Parenthood Federation and it is cooperating with 30 European and 140 family planning associations world-wide. The Association is also cooperating with all governmental and non-governmental organisations which are taking care of human rights and health.

www.ssinstitut.lt

The Institute of Family relations is a public institute where specialists of the highest qualification operate. The Institute is specialised in the following fields:

- pharmaceutical and not pharmaceutical healing of mental troubles for children and adults;
- consultations concern individual psychological problems and disordered relationships in the family;
- individual psychotherapy and encounter;
- systemic family's psychotherapy.

In its clinical work the "Institute of family relations" appeal to systemic conception about the reasons and healing of mental troubles - the help is applicable not only for the person who has problems but to the other family's members too. Our services are afforded to individuals who are



sick of all insanity which could be healed in ambulatory way. For children and teenagers who have trepidation's, emotional or treatment's troubles we are practicing the services of day's in-patient department.

The "Institute of family relations" participates in various projects, organises the educational work and publishes the cognitive educational literature.

The Centre's activities are:

- multisystemic help for children and their parents in the society's level;
- lectures and seminars for parents;
- the creation of help's model to the schools in which children with emotional or treatment's problems are learning;
- the education of various specialists who work with children;
- cooperation with various public, social and not governmental organisations.

Association 'Family club'

www.seimosklubas.lt

Preventive youth society

www.zingsnis.lt

www.jppc.lt

Objectives and activities of the Youth Psychological Aid Centre are:

1. Support for children and young people who experienced psychological crises, considered and planned to commit suicide.
2. Prevention, intervention and cure of suicides and psychological crises among teenagers and young people.
3. Psychological support for young people, teenagers, children (consultative, organisation of self-help groups).
4. Social support for young people, teenagers, children through:
 - Training of volunteers that could work in psychological-social support service (special courses and seminars).
 - Support for organisations working in the field (consultations, courses, seminars, training).
 - Education of young people, teenagers, children – discussions, seminars, club activities, publications).
 - Involvement of young people, teenagers, children into creative leisure time activity (group activities, clubs, special events).
5. Education of community life-spirit and skills (support of volunteer activity, new and independent initiatives, encouragement of cooperation and responsibility).
6. Education to civil responsibility (encouragement of independence, active participation in social/community life education on social responsibility, education and use of self-control).



<http://www.limeyard.co.uk/community/dchs/>

Dame Catherine Harpur's School is a flourishing rural school catering for children at foundation stage (3-5) key stage 1 (5-7) and key stage 2 (7-11). There is the facility for three class groups, each group not exceeding 15 children, with a maximum of eight children in the foundation stage class.

The school is entirely self-funded by parents and other benefactors.

<http://www.acepp.asso.fr/>

ACEPP, a non profit making association (1901 law), created in 1980, gathers approximately a thousand of local initiatives, mainly carried by parents and focused on the creation of facilities for young children, both on urban and rural areas.

The goals of ACEPP is to animate and develop an educational, parental movement: communication among families, in particular for setting actions contributing to the improvement of local life, the development of collective local initiatives, the insertion of women and young people, solidarity among families, the fight against exclusions.

In order to support the development of parental initiatives, ACEPP puts in action three main programmes:

- a programme of development of facilities for young children with parental participation in the underprivileged urban districts, thus supporting the fight against exclusion trough cultural mediation;
- a programme of development of rural areas, which supports the participation of inhabitants in local projects, based on the specific elements of the culture of each site and on the family-childhood policy;
- a long life learning programme for the early childhood professionals and labour insertion and qualification tools for unskilled young people who wish to professionalise themselves in the field of early childhood.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

By way of conclusion, in terms of the respect of children's right to a harmonious family life, the basic needs of all families regardless of type can be summed up in three major elements: families need *financial resources*, *services* and *time*.

The above has in particular attempted to show the importance of jobs and social security benefits in preserving families' living standards.

But families also need the support of services like child care provision. And time in the form of leave or flexible working hours is equally essential to help families.

Time is clearly key to the whole issue of reconciling working, family and private life. So far, time has been male: time for everyone is determined by male reference standards. So, time needs to be feminised. Will women change time? Or should we rather be looking at bringing men and women's time more into line? For the issue that concerns us, therefore, one key to achieving this new balance is the role of men, and hence fathers. They must necessarily be part of the answer.

Finally, women often work under great pressure: their occupational work is more stressful than before, and on top of this, they still have to look after their family. The difficulties of private life and relationship breakdowns are issues no less important than changes in working life. This makes reconciling work, family and private life more important than ever.

As far as the existence of specific training courses to help parents in promoting the rights of their children, we can say that although parents have the opportunity to learn several forms, methods and contents of pedagogical education in schools and kindergartens, at present there are no special training programmes for adults learning about children's rights and active citizenship.

The look in to the future

The partners of the CREA project, therefore, have as their main aim that of improving the situation of parents' education on the protection and promotion of their children's rights by:

- ✓ developing a **European Training Course** addressed to trainers, social managers and professionals in the social field working with parents. The course will focus on effective methodologies and contents to be applied in adult education initiatives aimed to develop active citizenship and promote children needs;
- ✓ publishing a **CD-Rom and a handbook** that will serve as methodological supports for trainers working with parents on how to make them aware of the opportunities offered by active European citizenship and, as a consequence, on how to use it to promote the rights of their children;
- ✓ disseminating the results and products of the CREA project at European level.