



## Observatory for Sociopolitical Developments in Europe

### Access to high-quality childcare – a key factor in reconciling family and work

#### Childcare as a key factor for the reconciliation of family and work – High-quality early childhood education and care for all children

By Christina Schliffka, Observatory for Sociopolitical Developments in Europe

More time for work and more time for the family – the debate on reconciliation policies revolves around these two dimensions. More time for the family means to enable childcare performed by mothers and fathers as well as care work for relatives. More time for work particularly targets increased involvement of women in the labour market.

Currently, there is a significant gap in employment (11,6 per cent) between women and men within the EU<sup>3</sup>. At 31 per cent, the proportion of women working part-time on the other hand is considerably higher than the proportion of men working part-time (8 per cent)<sup>4</sup>. At the same time, women continue to perform much more unpaid care work than men<sup>5</sup>.

#### Childcare and reconciliation policies

With its Work-Life Balance Package, published in April 2017, the European Commission has launched an initiative for the introduction of European standards in reconciliation policies. Paid leave schemes and flexible work arrangements are intended to strengthen families in the interplay between gainful employment and care work. In addition to this, childcare is a key factor in enabling parents to participate in gainful employment and in family work simultaneously.



One fifth of people currently performing care responsibilities state that they are not employed at all or work part-time due to a lack of care service provisions<sup>6</sup>. By creating a care infrastructure and building trust that the children are well cared for in the care facilities, childcare can help parents to find a balance between work and care responsibilities.

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#### Childcare

Childcare, also known as early childhood education and care, “refers to any regulated arrangement that provides education and care for children from birth to compulsory primary school age – regardless of the setting, funding, opening hours or programme content –”, and takes place outside the family, school and educational assistance or special education services<sup>2</sup>. It is also referred to as formal childcare. These arrangements can have different names. In Germany, for instance, the terms day care facility, kindergarten, crèche and childminding are commonly known. In Sweden, the offers are usually named pre-school, and in the Czech Republic, one finds the term children’s group.

1 European Commission (2018): Proposal for a Council Recommendation on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems – COM(2018) 271 final: 1.  
2 Cf. Thiersch, Renate (2005): Kindertagesbetreuung. In: Otto, Hans-Uwe; Thiersch, Hans (eds.): Handbuch der Sozialarbeit/Sozialpädagogik. 3rd edition. Neuwied: Luchterhand: 964.

## Childcare and early childhood development

In addition to the importance of reconciling family and work life for parents, childcare also has a decisive relevance for children and their development. Studies show that high-quality early childhood education and care has a positive effect on cognitive development and learning<sup>9</sup>. Education and care contribute to the development of language competence and mathematical skills, for instance<sup>10</sup>. Moreover, a connection can be drawn between early childhood education and care on the one hand, and lower school drop-out rates on the other<sup>11</sup>. Childcare can furthermore have positive effects on social competences<sup>12</sup>. Finally, there are long-term positive effects in the form of higher educational attainment, better opportunities on the labour market, higher incomes and better social integration<sup>13</sup>.

### Equal opportunities through childcare for all children, in particular for children in disadvantaged situations

Children from disadvantaged families in particular benefit from the positive effects of high-quality childcare. Childcare offers the opportunity to counteract inequality and social exclusion by levelling out the disadvantages stemming from different family backgrounds<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, the European Commission considers childcare to be a worthwhile public investment. On the one hand, equal opportunities and social mobility – on individual child-basis as well as with regards to the family – are promoted. On the other hand, investments into early childhood education have positive economic effects, as they foster knowledge and productivity, according to the European Commission<sup>15</sup>.

Against this background, new initiatives are currently being launched in Germany, too. Federal Minister for Family Affairs Dr. Giffey has announced a law on good childcare facilities, which is to offer several instruments aiming to support the German states in improving the quality of childcare services. This could include exemption from fees, flexible opening hours, an improvement in the ratio between carers and children as well as language training.

## Offering childcare for all children remains a challenge

Arguments in favour of the rights of each child to high-quality childcare are manifold. However, the obstacles parents face when opting for both care work as well as employment and wanting to take advantage of childcare services are at least as extensive. Whereas more than 32 million children in the EU are below school age, a mere 15 million can take part in childcare service offers at the moment<sup>16</sup>.



In order to achieve the aforementioned benefits of early childhood education and care for early childhood development on the one hand and to gain the trust of parents in the childcare facility on the other, a high quality of the services is a prerequisite. There is still room for improvement in this regard as well. Besides availability and quality, there are further barriers to access and affordability of

care services. High costs and lacking or insufficient financial support – especially for financially vulnerable families – prevent many children from taking part in such care services. Further barriers and obstacles are language barriers, lack of information, bureaucratic application procedures, waiting lists and allocation procedures, opening hours and accessibilities that do not meet the demand as well as lack of trust in the care facilities<sup>17</sup>.

## Work-Life Balance Package

The so-called Work-Life Balance Package of the European Commission proposes key legislative measures such as parental leave, paternity leave after birth and carer's leave, as well as flexible working arrangements for employees with care responsibilities. The Package consists of a proposal for a Directive and non-legislative measures. The Observatory has already given attention to this issue in the two previous newsletters "New Fathers Wanted – How Father Involvement in Family Work is Promoted throughout Europe" and "How Do European Countries Support Family Carers? A Look at Work-Life Balance Policies in Germany, Austria and Belgium". Moreover, the Package mentions an improvement of quality, affordability and availability of childcare services as a central field of action<sup>7</sup>.

## Children in disadvantaged situations

Disadvantages for children can arise for a whole range of reasons. According to the European Commission, children from migrant families, ethnic minorities (for example Roma) and refugee children, children with special needs or disabilities, children in alternative care and children without shelter, children of imprisoned parents and children in households at particular risk of poverty and social exclusion can be in particular danger to suffer from disadvantages<sup>8</sup>.

- 3 European Commission (2018): Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the development of childcare facilities for young children with a view to increase female labour participation, strike a work-life balance for working parents and bring about sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe (the "Barcelona objectives") – COM(2018) 273 final: 2.
- 4 Ibid: 6. 5 Ibid: 2.
- 6 COM(2018) 273 final: 7 (Fn. 3).
- 7 European Commission (2018): Work-Life Balance; available here.
- 8 COM(2018) 271 final: 13 (Fn. 1).
- 9 European Commission (2014): Proposal for key principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care. Report of the Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care under the auspices of the European Commission: 15.
- 10 COM(2018) 271 final: 11 (Fn. 1).
- 11 Ibid: 1. 12 Ibid: 11.
- 13 Vandenbroeck, Michel; Lenaerts, Kaolien; Beblavy, Miroslav (2018): Benefits of early childhood education and care and the conditions for obtaining them. EENNEE Analytical Report No. 32: 9; European Commission (2018): Commission Staff Working Document Accompanying the document Proposal for a Council Recommendation on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems – SWD(2018) 173 final: 13.
- 14 COM(2018) 271 final: 1 f. (Fn. 1).
- 15 SWD(2018) 173 final: 1 (Fn. 13).
- 16 COM(2018) 271 final: 2 (Fn. 1).
- 17 European Commission (2014): 21 ff. (Fn. 9); SWD(2018): 173 final: 17 (Fn. 13).

Against this background, the debate about improving the availability, access, quality and affordability of childcare continues to gain in importance. Only in this way, childcare can contribute to the reconciliation of family and work as well as to early childhood development.

## Current EU-initiatives in childcare

To tackle such problems and to foster the positive effects of childcare, a range of initiatives have been launched on European level – besides the Work-Life Package. These initiatives consider childcare from a reconciliation perspective as well as against the background of early childhood development.

The so-called Barcelona Objectives were adopted already in 2002. They set the objectives for the expansion of childcare services. At least 33 per cent of children between the ages of zero and three should have access to affordable, high-quality childcare in all EU member states. For children between the age of three and of school age, at least 90 per cent should have access to childcare. The European Commission is constantly monitoring if member states reach these goals, also within the scope of the European Semester<sup>20</sup>, most recently in May 2018. On EU-average, the objectives were met in 2018. However, there were 16 member states that did not meet the objectives for both age groups<sup>21</sup>. With this result in mind, a revision and potential update to the Barcelona Objectives is currently under discussion.

A Council Recommendation on high-quality early childhood education and care of May 2018<sup>22</sup> picks up on the Quality Framework Proposal for early childhood education and care<sup>23</sup>, which was already drawn up in 2014, and makes recommendations to the member states. The states are urged to improve access to high-quality early childhood education and care, to make childcare services affordable and inclusive, to support professionalization, to develop curricula and to promote monitoring and evaluation processes.

In a communication in November 2017, the European Commission furthermore describes the long-term goal of a European Education Area<sup>24</sup>, which also includes early childhood education and care as a basis for further education.



Just like childcare itself, early childhood development is also enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights. Moreover, the Commission Recommendation “Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage”<sup>25</sup> was adopted in 2013. As cornerstones of the fight against child poverty and social exclusion the Recommendation mentions access to adequate resources, access to affordable,

high-quality services – for instance childcare – as well as the child’s right to social participation and to participation in decision-making that affects its life. A proposal by the parliamentary group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament aims to introduce a so-called “Child Guarantee”. This guarantee is to constitute another political instrument for the implementation of the Commission Recommendation “Investing in children”. A feasibility study mandated by the Commission first examines the potential and feasibility of such a Child Guarantee.

Finally, in the first half of 2018, the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council initiated Council Conclusions on early childhood development, which also relate to early childhood education and care as key components in the fight against child poverty and social exclusion. These Conclusions were adopted by the Council in June 2018.

## European Pillar of Social Rights and European Semester

The European Pillar of Social Rights aims to provide citizens with new and more effective rights in terms of equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions, social protection and social inclusion<sup>18</sup>. The European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission have jointly signed it in 2017 at the Social Summit in Gothenburg.

The European Semester “is a cycle of economic and fiscal policy coordination within the EU. It is part of the European Union’s economic governance framework. [...] During the European Semester the member states align their budgetary and economic policies with the objectives and rules agreed at the EU level.”<sup>19</sup>

18 European Commission (2018): *The European Pillar of Social Rights in 20 principles*; available [here](#).

19 European Council (2018): *European Semester*; available [here](#).

20 SWD(2018) 173 final: 2 (Fn. 13).

21 KOM(2018) 273 final: 1 (Fn. 3).

22 KOM(2018) 271 final (Fn. 1).

23 European Commission (2014) (Fn. 9).

24 European Commission (2017): *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture The European Commission’s contribution to the Leaders’ meeting in Gothenburg, 17 November 2017 – COM(2017) 673 final*.

25 European Commission (2013): *Commission Recommendation of 20 February 2013. Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage – 2013/112/EU*.

## Conclusion and outlook

The numerous initiatives at EU level underline the importance of improving the quality and quantity of childcare, both from a reconciliation perspective and against the background of early childhood development. But it is not only on European level that ideas are presented showing how implementation can work on European and national level. National and regional policy instruments, measures and legislation are also aimed at improving access to high-quality childcare, especially for disadvantaged families. This was also highlighted during the European Expert Meeting, which was conducted by the Observatory in May 2018 together with the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ). Examples for good practices were exchanged with regard to how disadvantaged families, in particular, can be supported in gaining access to high-quality childcare services. Discussions focused in particular on care options during nonstandard working hours (early in the morning, in the evening and at the weekend), and the question of how access to tailor-made care offers for children from low-income families, single-parent families and families with a migration background can be achieved.

The contributions in this newsletter follow up from the discussion points of the debate and present policy instruments at regional level as well as model projects. The region of Flanders has implemented several measures aiming to support disadvantaged families in gaining access to childcare. This includes direct targeting of the families themselves as well as measures targeting the care facilities. These measures are presented by Christine Faure, employee at Kind en Gezin, the Flemish Agency for Health, Welfare and Family.

In addition to this, two other innovative approaches from Germany and Latvia are presented. These measures trial care services during nonstandard working hours via model projects. The Association of Single Mothers and Fathers (Verband alleinerziehender Mütter und Väter e.V.) has carried out and evaluated model projects on care offers for single parents with nonstandard working hours. The Latvian Ministry of Welfare has tested a voucher system for employees with nonstandard working hours. Co-financed by EU funds and in cooperation with employers, care arrangements are offered beyond the standard opening hours of care facilities.

## Flanders – How to stimulate and support access to childcare settings for vulnerable families?

By Christine Faure, Kind en Gezin, Flanders

In Flanders, formal childcare falls within the responsibility of the Flemish Minister for Welfare, Public Health and Family. With formal childcare, the Flemish Government seeks to provide a service to families, which has an economic, pedagogical and social function:

- 'Economic' because childcare allows parents to go to work and earn an income.
- 'Pedagogical' because a good childcare setting not only nurses young children and makes them feel safe, but also stimulates children in their physical and psychological development.
- 'Social' because childcare can counter the exclusion of disadvantaged groups and help promote their integration. The social function of childcare first and foremost implies fighting exclusion mechanisms and increasing accessibility for families which currently have difficulty in finding their way to childcare due to all kinds of thresholds. However, its social function encompasses more than just enhancing accessibility for disadvantaged groups and tackling obstacles. Accessible childcare allows parents to follow training, to apply for jobs to find work.





The Flemish Government decides which groups are given priority to use the provided places for which the provider receives a subsidy. This only applies to formal childcare for babies and toddlers.

The subsidy scheme for the formal care of babies and toddlers is a system with levels and starts from Level 0. Each level implies additional tasks and conditions. The higher the level the more subsidies one may receive, but also the more conditions one must fulfil.

|                                |                |  |                            |
|--------------------------------|----------------|--|----------------------------|
|                                |                | <b>Level 2</b>   | <b>Level 3</b>             |
|                                | <b>Level 1</b> | Income related fee subsidy   | Income related fee subsidy |
| <b>Level 0</b>                 | Base subsidy   | Base subsidy   | Base subsidy               |
| No income related parental fee |                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income related parental fee</li> <li>• Priority rules to observe</li> </ul> |                            |

**Subsidy scheme for providers of childcare services**

- *Childcare settings which receive an income related fee subsidy (Level 2):* granting absolute priority to children from families where childcare is absolutely necessary in the context of a work situation (retaining work, looking for work or following vocational training to that end), as well as to children from single-parent families and low-income families and to foster children. At least 20 per cent of the children in those childcare settings should belong to those priority groups. Income related parental fees in 2017 amount to a minimum of EUR 5.07 per day and a maximum of EUR 28.13 per day. In exceptional cases, a reduction on the minimum rate per day is possible.
- *Childcare settings, which receive a plus subsidy (Level 3):* realising a proactive admissions policy to give a childcare place to vulnerable families, aligning the activities with vulnerable families and building and disseminating expertise on how to deal with vulnerable families in a respectful manner. Childcare settings at level 3 must also make efforts to recruit workers from vulnerable groups. At least 30 per cent of the children in those childcare settings should belong to vulnerable families. Vulnerable families are families with a combination of at least two of the following characteristics: low income, single parent, poor education level, health or social problems.

Alongside the priority rules, also a number of tools, like for example a short **introduction film** on childcare with English subtitles, were developed as support for organisations that guide vulnerable families in finding their way to childcare settings. Local integrated networks are being facilitated and local authorities are stimulated to set up an information point to assist all families and vulnerable families in particular in their search for a place in a childcare setting.



## Interview on flexible childcare services for parents with nonstandard working hours in Germany and Latvia

With Miriam Hoheisel, German Federal Association of Single Mothers and Fathers (VAMV), and Iveta Baltiņa, Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia

*Innovative approaches are currently being tested to assess how parents can be offered flexible childcare services if they have nonstandard working hours. What are the specific needs of single parents in Germany and of employees in Latvia with regard to childcare services and the reconciliation of family and work?*

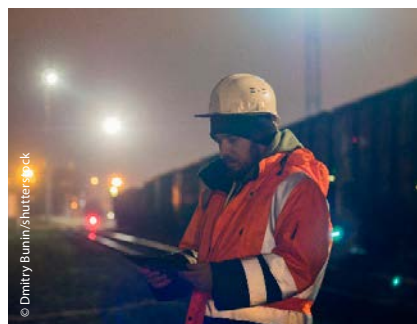
**Hoheisel:** Childcare facilities open at eight, but the parent’s work shift may start at six: the opening hours of childcare facilities are usually not compatible with the working hours of the parents working full-time. The definition of an “all-day” or “full-day” childcare spot differs in the various regions in Germany. If you are living in a community, which considers opening hours from 8 a.m. through 4 p.m. to be an all-day childcare service, you are in trouble having a full-time job. After all, you also have to keep in mind mandatory breaks and travel times.

Such gaps in childcare offers are already a big problem for family arrangements with two parents; they hamper full-time employment for the parents. For single parents, however, these gaps are threatening their very existence because there are fewer compensation options. While parents who share care responsibilities may be able to adjust their daily work to an arrangement that one parent brings the child to the day care centre in the morning and the other picks it up again in the afternoon, single parents often are forced to work only part-time due to these gaps in childcare offers. But part-time employment is in most instances not sufficient to secure a livelihood. Nine out of ten single parents are single mothers. They work in typical women’s jobs in the service sector, in social or medical fields and thus also have to deal with the usually atypical work hours: Early, late or night shifts as well as weekend shifts. In order to be able to secure their existence, single parents in particular need offers of flexible childcare services that go beyond the publicly provided care infrastructure.

**Baltiņa:** Demographic and social policy trends over the last several decades challenge traditional approaches to managing work and family life, especially practices around childcare during working hours. Most parents with young children in Latvia work outside the home. Finding affordable, high-quality child care is challenging in the best of circumstances. But for persons whose jobs are marked by volatile or nonstandard work schedules, childcare access becomes extraordinarily difficult. In the past few years, there has been growth in the part-time and contingent workforce and an increase in nonstandard work schedules – jobs requiring evening, weekend, night or variable schedules. In 2016 approximately 32,4 per cent of males and 28,3 per cent females have worked in evenings, 15 per cent of males and 7,3 per cent of females have worked at nights and 36,3 per cent of males and 32,3 per cent of females have regularly worked on Saturdays and Sundays. Nonstandard work schedules interfere with family roles and activities and complicate efforts to secure non-parental childcare within standard childcare arrangements as working time of kindergartens is from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on working days. The lack of flexible childcare services coupled with difficulties in reconciling work and care responsibilities has a strong impact on employment, especially for women. This often results in having no other choice than reducing working hours or dropping out completely of the labour market. For employers it is significant to find a balance between the needs of the company and the individual, including reconciliation activities on work and family life balance, thus increase employee job satisfaction, which in turn impacts employee turnover and productivity.

**Which approaches do the model projects follow in order to meet these needs and demands?**

**Hoheisel:** From 2014-2017, our association has in its **model projects** offered childcare services at home in addition to the regular childcare services at care centres. The projects were pursued in the cities of Berlin, Essen and Mainz. Depending on individual needs, the offer included pick-up and drop-off services as well as care during non-standard working hours, for instance overnight or on weekends, at the families’ homes. This was supplemented by a comprehensive range of consultation services. One aim was to work out how family-friendly solutions could be found together with the employers. The offer was either free of charge for the single parents or available at a merely minimal contribution. The project was made possible thanks to the Walter Blüchert Foundation.



However, these model projects were nothing but a drop in the ocean. The waiting lists were long and behind many inquiries were cases of great urgency and despair, in which the loss of employment was looming, a job offer could not be accepted, or training could not be started without supplementary childcare. And not all cases of hardship could enter the project – by far not. In Essen, the project was continued by the local community council, though.

**Baltija:** The project “Vouchers for the provision of flexible child-minders service to workers with nonstandard work schedules” has been implemented as an experimental intervention where a new subsidized flexible form of child-care service – flexible “open-hours” child-minders – was introduced. The model of subsidization includes public vouchers for subsidized child-minders and private co-financing from enterprises with nonstandard work schedules. To introduce flexible childcare services, experimental and control groups were sampled. Employers and employees selected in the experimental sample were receiving subsidized child-minder services within a period of ten months. Vouchers gave the right to use purchased child-minder not more than 80 hours per month for one employed person with a nonstandard work schedule and a child up to seven years of age; if a particular employed parent within the experimental group had need for a larger scope of child-minder services, he or she had the possibility to co-finance the larger-scale service by own resources.

The project was implemented in three municipalities, namely Riga, Valmiera and Jelgava. 38 institutions in total participated. 30 of them formed the experimental group that received a subsidized child-minder service; the rest formed the control group. 152 workers in total were provided by child-minder services during late hours, nights and weekends. One of the project activities was the development of an integrated tool of family-friendly childcare arrangements in the workplace for workers with non-standard work schedules and the annual evaluation of enterprises according to this tool. The Institute for Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility participated in the project as a partner.

*What were your experiences within the projects? What effects did the projects have on the quality of life of the families and on opportunities for social participation for the children? In how far have the projects and the offered additional childcare services enabled participants to pick up, expand or continue gainful employment?*

**Hoheisel:** In order to assess the effectiveness of the various services and their general adaptability, the German Federal Association of Single Mothers and Fathers has carried out an accompanying evaluation. This evaluation shows that individual, flexible and need-covering supplementary childcare can indirectly increase employment opportunities, lead to an increase in income, stabilise household income and lead to independence from social transfer payments.

More than half of the participating single parents were able to pick up employment thanks to the project. Almost one in three said that participation in the project enabled them to maintain or to not reduce their working hours. 11 per cent of the participants were able to expand their part-time position into a full-time job, and 16 per cent were able to increase the number of hours of their part-time work by four to five hours per week. Overall household incomes rose for more than half of the participants. In this way, formerly unmet needs of the children could be met in a better way. While in the first survey, a mere 3 per cent of single parents said that they could easily pay their children everything they needed, in the third survey wave, there were already 21 per cent who were able to do so. This enabled the children to participate in society and to experience social activities.

In addition, the easing of everyday life led to a relaxation in family life, which in turn benefited the children. They also benefited from the additional relationship with another caregiver and the reduced financial worries of single parents. Moreover, the

professional success of single parents added in expanding the children's perspectives. For instance, the child of one participant, who could complete her job training thanks to the additional childcare service, said: "My mother is a certified nurse. So I will become a doctor."

**Baltija:** The need for support is more essential for families where both parents are working nonstandard hours as well as for single parents. Child-minder services in non-standard working hours are much more demanded in big cities. The most flexible service according to parents is a nanny since it can be adjusted to the individual needs of the family. The best model of financing the child-minder services is a cooperation between the state, municipality, employer and employee since it reduces the financial involvement of each party and also lowers the risks that the service might not be used according to its aim and content. The share of the payment should be adjusted to the resources available to each family with a possibility to reduce the amount for families with low incomes or more children. The level of job satisfaction correlates with the availability of flexible child-minder services – the more available the service the higher the level of satisfaction. The availability of child-minder services directly affects the stress level and the overall rhythm of the day – members of the experimental group showed better skills of planning, finding time for family activities and being flexible in their everyday life while members of the control group complained about being stuck in a hamster wheel with no way out in terms of finding a balance between work and family life. Child-minder services in the experimental sample have made it easier for parents to meet their obligations not to leave the child without supervision which supports child safety.



## News from the Observatory

The Observatory analyses sociopolitical developments in Europe and considers their potential impact on Germany. It carries out research and studies – often comparative analyses of the general European context –, monitors European developments and organises international conferences. Its aim is to link stakeholders so as to promote European exchanges and encourage mutual learning.

### Focus on reconciliation

In 2017 and 2018, the Observatory is putting focus on how European states support people in reconciling employment, care work and childcare.

#### *Promoting father involvement in family work*

In May 2017, the Observatory organised the first European Expert Meeting entitled "Towards an Equal Partnership in Families. How European States Promote Father Involvement in Family Work". On the occasion of the publication of the Work-Life Balance Package by the European Commission in April 2017, a series of European Expert Meetings on the topic of reconciliation policies was initiated. The European exchange within the framework of these Expert Meetings was attended by representatives from science, associations and politics from various European countries. The results from the Expert Meeting are published [here](#). An overview on how European states promote the involvement of fathers in family work can be retrieved [here](#).

#### *Improving the reconciliation of care work and employment*

The results of the second Expert Meeting on the topic of reconciliation of care work and employment can be found [here](#).



*Childcare as a key factor in reconciliation policies*

In May 2018, the Observatory organised the third European Expert Meeting entitled “How childcare services contribute to the reconciliation of family and work. Supporting disadvantaged families”. The results from these discussions will soon be published [here](#).

*Reconciliation policies from a gender equality perspective*

The fourth and final Expert Meeting of the series will in October 2018 shed light on the issue of reconciliation policy from a gender equality policy perspective. Among other things, the focus will be on the question of which gender equality policy demands are made on reconciliation policy in various European states and at European level and how these can be met.

**Further publications***Counselling services for family carers*

Counselling services for family carers help to reconcile employment and care work and can also make an important contribution to one’s own health and protect against overwork. Family carers depend on information and counselling with regard to care work and should be enabled to inform themselves about their rights. The Observatory has published the working paper entitled “**Counselling Services for Family Carers in Europe**” which presents examples of good practices in Scotland, Sweden, Austria and France.

*Working methods and political influence of migrant organisations in Austria*

Migrant organisations play an important role in civil society. They support migrants and make their needs visible within the political sphere. The Observatory is currently conducting an investigation into the working methods and political influence of migrant associations in Austria. The results from this investigation will be published in a working paper, expected for September 2018, which will be made available at the Observatory’s website.

You can find all the results of our work here:

<https://www.beobachtungsstelle-gesellschaftspolitik.de/en/publications/>

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**Project design**

The Observatory for Sociopolitical Developments in Europe is a project run by the Institute for Social Work and Social Education (ISS). ISS maintains two project offices, one in Frankfurt on the Main and one in Berlin. The Observatory is funded by the German Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ).

**Publishing information****Publisher**

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This is a publication of the Observatory for Sociopolitical Developments in Europe.  
Homepage: [www.sociopolitical-observatory.eu](http://www.sociopolitical-observatory.eu)

The German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, 11018 Berlin, provides funding for the project “Observatory for Sociopolitical Developments in Europe”. This publication does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany. Responsibility shall remain with the publisher and/or the respective author.

**The agency responsible for the Observatory is:**  
Institute for Social Work and Social Education

**Translation:** Tim Steins  
**Design:** [www.avitamin.de](http://www.avitamin.de)  
**Date of publication:** August 2018

This publication may be downloaded at:  
[www.sociopolitical-observatory.eu](http://www.sociopolitical-observatory.eu)

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[Nadya Eugene/shutterstock](http://Nadya Eugene/shutterstock) (Nr. 311662901)  
[Halfpoint/fotolia](http://Halfpoint/fotolia) (Nr. 71511220)