



8th ECOSY Congress Resolution

“Acting today to ensure better tomorrow – for a good quality public childcare!”

The EU Presidency conclusions adopted in Barcelona in year 2002 set up the famous “Barcelona targets” for the European Union Member States concerning childcare policies. The targets were to provide childcare by 2010 to at least 90% of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age and at least 33% children under 3 years of age. Two years later, in year 2004 the United Nations’ Committee on the Rights of the Child set out 17 common recommendations for early childhood development from a human rights perspective, which included among others: to increase human and financial resources for early childhood development, particularly public investment; and for governments, government agencies, academics, and representative organizations to ‘continue high-level policy dialogues and research on the crucial importance of quality in early childhood development’. As ECOSY – Young European Socialists we believe that childcare is an important component of a Social Europe that we struggle for. We believe that providing good quality public childcare for free to all the children across Europe is acting today to ensure better tomorrow, to give an answer to demographical challenges taking into account agenda of “more and better jobs”, “quality public services”, education for all and gender equality. Believing that not enough has been done, we put forward the following resolution.

Unite and Define childcare!

As ECOSY we believe that childcare services encompass formal and informal care, including parental care of children below school-going age with emphasis on children under three years old and so called early childhood education and care. What is more, we believe that childcare services should also be provided to children of school-going age outside of school working hours. Currently each and every national model of childcare is different – in terms of social attitudes and child philosophies, supply structures and service provisions, public and private funding mechanism, childcare preferences and childcare workforce structure. The absence of a common vision and policy for childcare services makes it difficult to assess the sector’s future in Europe, since every Member State has its own childcare agenda. This is why:

- We call European Commission to face a challenge and formulate a clear, long term vision of its aims for the future of childcare services (namely care and education) in Europe. Such vision shall be applicable across the entire EU and should be fair and equitable between Member States.
- We call European Parliament, following the debate and conclusions on the future of the European Social Model, to prepare a report on Childcare in Europe providing its definition and proposing set of minimal standards.

Enhance and facilitate participation in labour market!

For ECOSY a key challenge for convergence of childcare services throughout the EU is for women and men to have equal access to employment, to increases, in other words, chances of women to participate in the labour market. It is essential in order to fight existing gender pay gap, as also the





recent years' practise that women are pushed into part-time jobs if they wish to accord their professional and private lives. Additionally, from overall prosperity perspective statistics prove that additionally the growth of female workforce throughout the EU has raised the overall level of employment in the economy, which has another concrete output related to reduction of child poverty. Politically, the EU through its Social Agenda 2005-2010 is committed to expanding Europe's labor market, improving flexibility for working parents, and removing barriers to employment, particularly for women.

Additionally to accessible good quality, public and free childcare, we believe that power of EU legislation is in setting out minimum conditions for working in the EU, which along with equal rights for workers shall include minimum paternity and maternity entitlements. The Barcelona Council Recommendation on Childcare, adopted by all Member States, provided a framework of principles for the development of policies to enable parents to reconcile employment and childcare, including services, leave arrangements, changes in the workplace and measures to encourage increased participation by men in the care of children. Progress has failed to go beyond adherence to minimum standards and there remain considerable variations in leave entitlements between different countries throughout the EU, in terms of length of leave and payment.

These are the reasons for which, as ECOSY – Young European Socialists we call for:

- Bringing childcare in scope of OMC (Open Method of Coordination), which encourages undoubtedly the convergence of national policies towards common EU objectives through exchange of best practices.
- Focusing work of European Institute for equality between men and women, once established, on encouraging EC and Member States in implementing objectives for gender equality, including guarantee for free, high quality, public child care.

Stop blaming women for demographical challenges – challenge fertility rates providing people choices!

Population in Europe is ageing. The increase of life expectancy is not a problem, as it is often discussed in public, it is wonderful fact, that we as young generation are welcoming. Same time the number of children aged under five years is declining and this is happening faster than in any other continent. However industrialised societies have seen marked increases in maternal employment in the last 30 years, it has also been observed that more women are now having children later on in life – the reason for that is that women in their 30s are more likely to be established in a career, have higher level of income and have more resources to cover additional care than women in their 20s. The highest proportion of births in Europe has shifted from the 25-29 age group to the 30-34 age group in last 20 years, while proportion of women giving birth at age of 35 or over has doubled over same period.

Politicians and society tend to use those statistics in rhetoric to blame women for the described changes, claiming what negative impact it will have on both economy and society. Improving the conditions is one important topic, accepting that children are a personal choice of every person the other. We believe that this blaming-shaming has to stop and therefore we call for





- Change of approach, which in vision for child care in Europe that we call for, will underline that availability of free, good quality childcare enables young people to make choices in their family planning.
- more effective fight with stereotypes, as described in EC Roadmap for equality between men and women of 2006.

Fight poverty at any stage!

The greatest social driver of childcare has been the quest to reduce poverty in Europe. The Amsterdam Treaty began this fight against social exclusion as an EU objective, while in 2000, the EU asked Member States to take decisive measures to eradicate poverty by 2010. Building an inclusive EU is considered essential for achieving economic growth, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. Although it may be considered a social benefit rather than a social driver, it is important to note that provision of formal childcare for children aged 0-3 years, from disadvantaged backgrounds and areas, tends to raise their ability to benefit from education and learning over the long term. It has also been found, over the long term, to reduce early school-drop outs, crime, unemployment. Additionally, children who attended higher-quality childcare provision make better academic progress and are rated higher on school-related skills and, by age 11, are more likely to be in a gifted school stream.

- This is why we call all the member states to devote themselves to pledge of free, high quality and public childcare upon this years Summit.

Provide quality – it is an investment in the future!

In the debate about childcare children are often reduced to objects. Children are individuals with rights; their needs have to be the core of the debate.

This is why we need a good quality care. To achieve that we appeal for a holistic approach to the childcare policies that encompasses pedagogy, health care, nurturing and education.

Whereas increasing the coverage and accessibility of childcare services was at the top of the political agenda in many Member States during the 1990s, the focus of childcare policy in the present and immediate future is shifting towards improving the quality of services and introducing effective techniques to measure and monitor quality. Investment in certain aspects of quality have the greatest benefit, among which we identify: well-trained staff that are committed to their work with children; facilities that are safe and sanitary and accessible to parents ratios and group sizes that allow staff to interact appropriately with children; supervision of staff that maintains consistency staff development that ensures continuity, stability and improving quality provision of learning opportunities for children.





Defining, ensuring and monitoring quality should be a participatory and democratic process that engages staff, parents and children. Pedagogical frameworks focusing on children's holistic development across the age group can support good practice. This, therefore, makes it all the more crucial for a quality agenda sharing good practice to be prioritized in Europe. To make more informed choices about childcare services in the future, parents are certain to demand quality indicators, which are currently lacking. There is still a long way to go in terms of achieving a comparable quality agenda in Europe which can be attributed to inherent differences in the structure of childcare services, welfare systems, regulation, and attitudes to quality.

As ECOSY therefore

- We call Member States to set the common minimum standards indicators for childcare. We believe they will be beneficial to complete the promoted life-cycle approach and will comply with vision of joint European educational standards, reflected already in processes like Bologna one.
- We call for ensuring the decent working conditions for staff working within childcare, which will include opportunities for life-long learning and rising qualifications i.e. through European exchange programs, which from university and school staff should be expanded towards kindergarten teachers.

As ECOSY – Young European Socialists, herewith reaffirming strong believe in free, good quality, public childcare for all, we shall join our efforts to support therefore the PES Campaign “Children first” launched at the last PES Congress in Porto in December 2006.

