



Existential Field 4:

Local Politics – Programmes and Best Practice Models

Working Report (April 2010)



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Working Reports

Funded by the European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme and co-ordinated by Technical University Dortmund, FAMILYPLATFORM gathers a consortium of 12 organisations working together to articulate key questions about the family for the *European Social Science and Humanities Research Agenda 2012-2013*.

There are four key stages to the project. The first is to chart and review the major trends of comparative family research in the EU in 8 '*Existential Fields*' (EF). The second is to critically review existing research on the family, and the third is to build on our understanding of existing issues affecting families and predict future conditions and challenges facing them. The final stage is to bring the results and findings of the previous three stages together, and propose key scientific research questions about families to be tackled with future EU research funding.

This *Working Report* has been produced for the first stage of the project, and is part of a series of reports, as follows:

- EF1. Family Structures & Family Forms**
- EF2. Family Developmental Processes**
- EF3. Major Trends of State Family Policies in Europe**
- EF4a. Family and Living Environment**
- EF4b. Local Politics – Programmes and Best Practice Models**
- EF5. Patterns and Trends of Family Management in the European Union**
- EF6. Social Care and Social Services**
- EF7. Social Inequality and Diversity of Families**
- EF8. Media, Communication and Information Technologies in the European Family**

Both full versions and summaries of Working Reports are available to download from the FAMILYPLATFORM website, where stakeholders are invited to comment on the findings, and have an input into the project.

1. Introduction

In considering *Family and Local Environment* (Existential Field 4), a special and relevant attention has to be given to family policies at local level. The local level has been acquiring more and more importance in qualifying the well-being of families and in providing services to families' primary needs. In part 3 of the present work on *Family and Living environments* attention is focused on a specific review on the state of the art of research on local family policies, and in particular on programs and good practices in different regional areas and in various countries.

The research was conducted prominently on the Web, using European databases and search engines (key word used: local family policy, local welfare, local politics, subsidiarity and local welfare).

These are the major sources of research and comparative databases considered.

- **Eurostat.** Eurostat has recently developed a regional statistic database (http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/region_cities/regional_statistics) and a urban statistics database (http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/region_cities/city_urban).

Eurostat's regional statistic database brings comparative data on population, agriculture, economic trends, R&D expenditure, tourism, transport and other principal aspects of economic and social life in the European Union.

The *Urban Audit* section was born as a tentative data collection of comparable indicators for European cities. The purpose of this Urban Audit was to test the feasibility of collecting comparable measurements of the quality of life in European cities. Data are collected from European, National and local databases and a set of indicators for comparison has been created.

Both the Regional statistics database and the Urban Audit database have comparative data, but no comparative data on local policies or programmes can be found. Nevertheless, Eurostat's database is of great use in building a sample of similar regions and urban contexts for a comparative European approach to local family policies.

- **Oecd.** OECD has recently developed the OECD Family Database (<http://www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database>), which gives a lot of interesting and comparative information on families. The databases work on National basis, so there is no useful information on local policies.
- **European Observatory on Family Policies.** The European Observatory on Family Policies elaborated *The Family Policy Database*, which provided standardized comparative data, reinforced and enhanced by country-specific documentation and information. It is focused on specific measures on five fields of family policy (cash benefits for families, cash benefits for lone parents, minimum income, child-care services, cash benefits and time-rights related to parenting and caring for children) from the origins to the mid-1990. All data are on National basis.

- **Council of Europe Family Policy Database.** The Council of Europe has developed, in recent years, a strong interest towards family, since, as stated in the homepage of the COE website, «social cohesion, democracy and human rights are first experienced and learnt in the family environment. They play an essential role in the individual's emotional development and preparing children for life in society. The family is often called upon to support its vulnerable members such as elderly people and people with disabilities, becoming a provider of last-resort social protection in time of need. The Council of Europe promotes the social, legal and economic protection of families. We pay special attention to vulnerable family members, gender equality and children's rights. The "best interests of the child" is the guiding principle behind all our family policies» (http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/familypolicy/default_en.asp). The Council of Europe has therefore elaborated the Council of Europe Family Policy Database, which consists in a series of comparative sheets, http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/familypolicy/Database/default_en.asp.

Of particular interest are the Family policy objectives database (which has also comparative data) and the database on the different relationships between Governments and non-governmental associations, where we can find information on the level of NGO's participation in policy-making

- **The Committee of the Regions (CoR)** is the EU's assembly of regional and local representatives and was created in 1994 to give representatives of local government a say over the content of these laws. Around two-thirds of EU legislation is implemented by local and regional authorities in the Member States. The CoR organizes five plenary sessions a year, where its 344 members vote on opinions issued in response to proposed legislation. The European Commission, which initiates EU laws, and the Council of Ministers, which determines the final content of the legislation (usually in tandem with the European Parliament), are obliged to consult the CoR on a wide range of policy areas including the environment, employment and transport. The Lisbon Treaty will strengthen the position of the Committee of the Regions further. In future, the Committee must be consulted by the European Parliament on all issues that are important for regions and municipalities. The Committee can also appeal to the EU Court of Justice if its rights are infringed or it believes that an EU law violates the subsidiarity principle or fails to respect regional or local powers. On www.cor.europa.eu a wide range of studies and publications can be found, but no research on local family policies has been conducted yet.
- **The European Alliance for Families** (more information in the next pages) has a web-site (http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/emplweb/families/index.cfm), whose main goal is the information on family policy issues across the EU and the dissemination of good practices in family policy.

2. Results of the Research Review

2.1 General hints to approach the issue

a) Family Policy: the importance of the local level

According to many scholars, Family Policy has to be *explicit*, *coherent* and *legitimate*: it means that nations or local governments should have «a defined set of goals, pursued by a coherent set of policies, and implemented through an institutional framework of a designated government department» (Millar, 1998: 121). This is in the same time a strict and broad definition: *strict*, as it leaves a narrow “espace” for differentiation, and *narrow*, as it compels Nations, as well as Local Governments, to bring on many different actions. In our work we won’t be dealing with the research on of family policy’s definition and the debate about it, but we need to leave it on the background and to remain acknowledged about it.

Of course, as noticed: «If the criterion is adopted that family policies should have the family as their target population, many of the measures examined in analysis of national family policies may not, strictly speaking, fall within this policy domain. Few member states readily admit, for instance, that policies in area such as childcare and parental leave are directly aimed at family unit» (Hantrais, 2000: p. 45). The notion of Family policy bears in itself a double complexity. First of all, family policy entangles policies not specifically linked to family, such as childcare provisions, labour market, and urban development. Secondly, family policy is sometimes an “uneasy” issue to be approach for politicians and governors. This complexity appears prominently also in local family policies.

As a matter of fact, the crucial relevance of the local level in pursuing global UE targets and objectives has been widely recognized since many years, not solely for social matters, but also in the economic field: «The Union has accepted that macro economic policy alone cannot resolve the current high level of unemployment, and that a regional and local approach can act as an important element of the UE’s employment strategy ... The importance of the local and regional level was also underlined in the Commission White Paper “Growth, Competitiveness, Employment. The challenges and the ways forward into the 21st Century” issued in 1994» (from the Foreword of “*Inclusive Cities: Building local capacity for development*”, European Union, Regional Policy, Brussels, 2000, n. 32 of the “Regional Development Series”).

The local level is therefore acquiring more and more relevance, as it is at local level that support actions can be targeted to the specific needs and problems can be tackled in a more «rounded and responsive way». A recent study on local development and inclusive cities drew the conclusion that, in order to enhance local development, some actions are required:

1. Devolved power

- a. Public authorities need to devolve certain powers and resources to the local level;
- b. full responsibilities do not have to be delegated at the outset, but local level has to be “trained” in taking responsibilities;
- c. public authorities need to reduce bureaucratic obstacles that can drown local initiatives, but at the same time have to retain the capacity to take corrective measures if the local efforts fail or stagnate;
- d. public authorities should learn from local good practices;
- e. flexible and long-term funding is important for real policy improvement and the proper design and testing of new initiatives.

2. Local strategies

- a. Local agencies need to progress, over time, from being funding-led to a more strategic approach;

- b. The process of strategy formulation has to be undertaken by local agencies, instead of consultants;
- c. The function of local initiatives should develop as their experience increase.

3. Building partnership

Local development depends on partnership working to be effective, which requires cooperation, compromise and creativity. Local partnerships cannot be forced and community involvement, based also on trust, is essential to set an effective action at local level.

4. Wider city and regional framework

Local development strategies cannot treat their neighbourhoods in isolation from their city and regional context, therefore they need to reflect external opportunities and constraints and to be aligned with mainstream programmes

5. Competition and collaboration

Competition between local partnerships can be good, if raising the quality of the local projects. In many cases, however, isolation and division have emerged from local competitiveness. On the contrary, local partnerships should co-operate with each other on practical projects to share the costs and to transfer experience

6. Area definition

Priority areas can be defined on the basis of community boundaries, economic development potential or population size. Many practitioners believe that the optimum population size is between 10,000 and 25,000.

7. People

The attributes of the people involved in local development are crucial, but many organisations and local agencies pay insufficient attention to staff recruitment and skills needed in practical projects.

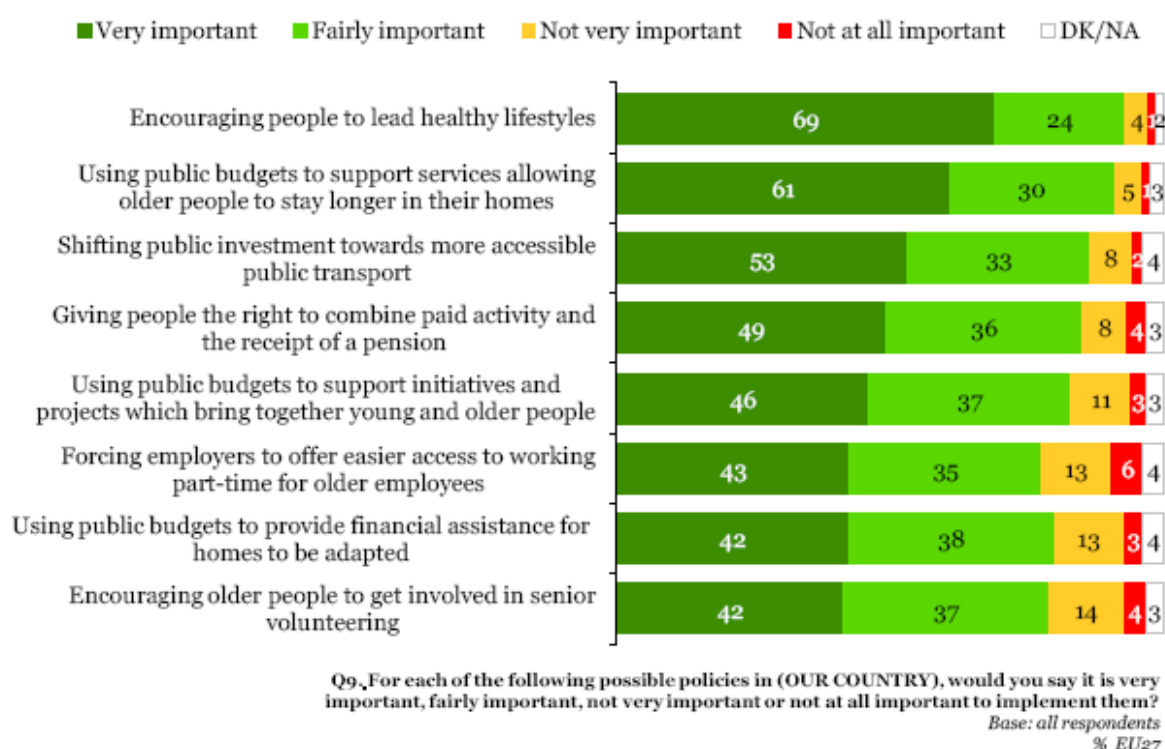
These methodological indicators have been elaborated in a comparative study on local development in three cities (Glasgow, Dublin and Duisburg) and can be assumed as a sort of framework reference in implementing and assessing local family policies.

b) Care: a key word for welfare and for family

In our research we also confronted with the concept of social care, especially in relation with the changing of welfare state: in Daly and Lewis study (2000), social care is intended as a care-centred welfare system that «develops care as an activity and set of relations lying at the intersection of state, market and family (and voluntary sector) relation». Social care has been also a specific issue of a comparative study (Kröger, *Comparative Research on Social Care. The State of Art*, 2001) in which *family informal care* is approached as *family obligations*, which «does not operate according to any fixed pre-ordained rules» but which seems to be build upon the «principle of reciprocity» (Kröger: 25-26).

In approaching local family policies, we have therefore the necessity to remember that family should not be only an object of care, but is also an active subject of care. Care, as a matter of fact, is one of the key and fundamental dimensions of family life and families seem to be deeply conscious about that dimension. According to a recent survey of Eurobarometer on care and ageing population, in almost all Member States, a majority of respondents said it was very important to use public budgets to support services allowing older people to stay longer in their homes (assuming that staying at home need a reliable family network for care). Only in the Czech Republic, Denmark and Romania, less than half of the respondents think it would be very important to support such services with public money. (Eurobarometer: 13)

Importance of implementing policy actions



Also the SOCCARE Project, financed in the 5th Framework Programme, draws some similar conclusions: «Finally, we want to emphasise that it is highly necessary that policies do away with strict dichotomies. Citizens of Europe are not either workers or carers. They are both at the same time. As well, children, disabled people and older people are not in need of either informal or formal care. Both are essential and practically always, there is need to integrate both at the level of everyday family life. To face the challenges of the future, an integrated policy perspective on work and care is required in Europe» (Kröger, 2003).

c) Local Welfare: a reference framework for comparative approach

The different national welfare systems (federal, centralized etc.) are far from being harmonized and thus lead to many different opportunities for developing local welfare policies: this will become very clear in analyzing the good practice models. In States such as France or UK we can face a lot of “local interventions” promoted by the central state. In other Countries, such as

Germany and Italy or Spain, the local policies are directly promoted by Regions, or even Municipalities in a more flexible context. This is not, of course, an evaluation of family policies (for instance France, a strongly centralized system, is renowned to be much more “family friendly” than many other Countries), but only a sort of methodological premise (and will be, of course, a point to develop in our critical review of the research on this issue).

In our research, we have not found comparative studies on local family policies, but we have found two different and interesting comparative studies on local welfare systems.

The first historical development of welfare was eminently local: in 19th century the local authorities were the first to react to the mounting problems brought by industrialization and urbanization. It was only during the 20th century that the building of the modern welfare state integrated the local responsibilities, in some cases. So we can argue that «from an historical and developmental perspective the concept of the “local welfare state” should be useful to identify the origin and (perhaps “path-dependent”) persistence of such local responsibilities» (Wollman, 2004: p.1).

Comparing four different local welfare systems (UK, Sweden, France and Germany, each of them representative of a specific National welfare system, as commonly acknowledged) we can point out that «It is particularly in view of this budgetary and administrative responsibility of local government (...) that one may speak, for good reason, of a distinct “local welfare state”» (Wollmann 2004). The “local welfare state” is realized, according to Wollman, in Germany and Sweden, while in UK and France, due to different reasons (a more political one in UK, a more “territorial” one in France) the welfare system is highly centralized.

The comparison among different local welfare systems highlights also the involvement and responsibility of non-public (voluntary as well as private) organisations and groups, and also families. This involvement is often referred to as informal care. So that we can resume in this table the results of Wollman studies, schematizing in the following way:

Country	Level of local budgetary and administrative responsibility	Involvement of voluntary and no-profit sector and families
Great Britain	Low	Low
Sweden	High	Low
France	Low	High
Germany	High	High

Moving forward from these conclusions, Mingione and Oberti observed that «local systems must be evaluated in terms of a varied mix of institutional and individual actors where diversity and complexity play an increasingly important role within the development of active policies, based on partnership implementation and on shared responsibility between providers and recipients. From this standpoint, local welfare systems are conceived as dynamic processes in which the specific local, social and cultural context give rise both to diversified mixes of actor underlying the strategies for implementing social policies and to diverse profiles of needy or assisted populations. At this level of analysis the main difficulty is to go beyond mere description and find parameters of interpretation» (Mingione, Oberti 2003).

Although Mingione and Oberti analyzed local policies against poverty and social exclusion, and not local family policies, we can find that the following diagram on the structure of local welfare system is extremely interesting also in the case of local family policies, and that the connection between State and Local/Regional authorities can change «in nature and intensity». As we can see, in Mingione and Oberti's diagram family plays a specific role and we can argue that, in a similar diagram concerning family policies, family would play a much more important role.

Moreover, the involvement of the community in the local welfare creation of services has been declared fundamental in a 2004 European trans-national project *Equal-Tempora* on work-life balance and care. In this project we can also find the statement that services have to be “near to persons, families and their living environment”, also according to the principle of subsidiarity: «The different types (of services) should give an answer to the needs of the environment, according to the principle of subsidiarity» (Equal Tempora 2: 14). Among the new challenges that local welfare services have to meet, we find that «Different actors have to participate in a concerted manner in the implementation of the local welfare services (different local administrative institutions, social players, professional, community, family)» (Equal Tempora 2: 14).

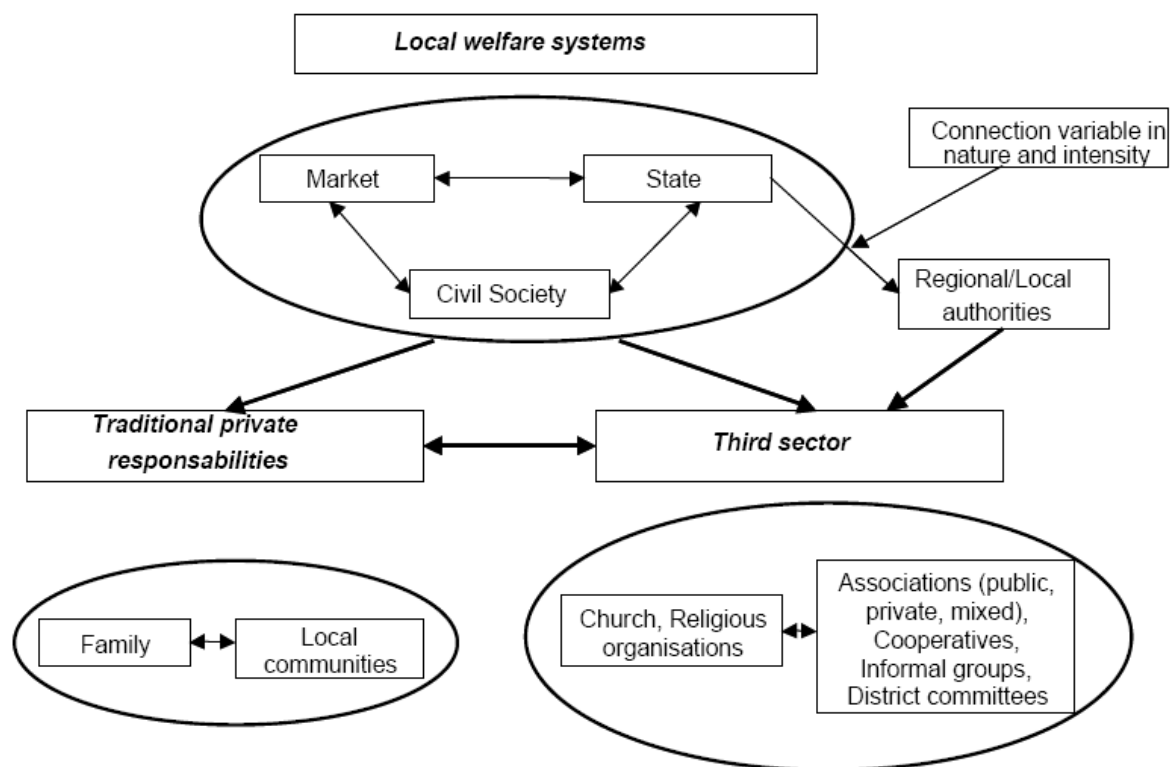


Figure 2. Diagram of the structure of local welfare systems

Although there is no comparative studies on local policies for families, the local level of welfare and political intervention in building new family policies is assuming a new importance, according also to some statements made in the recent ESF Paper *Partnership for more Family-Friendly living*

and working conditions: «European Structural Fund projects are now seeking the way to meet Lisbon targets and family policies are therefore seen in the context of enhancing employment and gender equality, starting specifically from the local level, where families and companies are» (European Commission, 2008: 9).

2.2 The Good Practice Model

Given the lack of general and comparable cross-national information of family policies at regional and local level, the descriptive part of this paragraph will present a set of different projects/good practices, from different nations and on different topics, in order to highlight the actual variety of approaches and experiences. We are obviously aware of the rich and “hot” methodological debate on the definition and qualification of the concept itself of “good or best practices”, which can be considered parallel to the similar question of “how to transform temporary (usually public-funded) projects in permanent structural actions”.

So we prefer to adopt the expression “good practice” rather than “best practice”, since the *good practice approach* is more “humble” and less ambitious, given the state of the art of the methodological debate on what a good/best practice really is. Moreover, we adopt an empirical definition of good practice, inspired by ESF approach, which limits the definition to “a specific operational model which enables the actors to reach the targets given to a project”.

According to a definition given in the European project Equalset (<http://www.kezenfogva.hu/equalset/index.php?q=en/node/85>), a good practice is a *positive action* (e.g. a mechanism or a methodology) that must:

- *be successful*, providing positive results for a specific objective;
- *be innovative*, implementing new or different solutions to existing ones in the territory, sector or collectivity. Solutions can be completely new or incorporated from other contexts. Innovation can be found in the process (measures, contents, methods, approaches, tools), in the object (new areas of interest, new social groups) or in the context (adaptation or improvement on the current conditions, starting-up of networks);
- *have a possible multiplying effect or transference to other areas*, being either horizontally, that is visible, communicable, shareable (dissemination) and/or vertically, that is integrated and applicable to systems and regulations;
- *be sustainable*, having created a need, being assumed as a service, being able to produce improvements for the society.

We can also argue that good practices in family policy should include at least seven specific qualities, such as:

1. **Efficacy**: good practices have to achieve the expected and projected results.
2. **Reproducibility**: good practices should be used to find solutions to similar problems in similar contexts, achieving positive results. Good practice, moreover, should be adequate to the financial, legal and organisational bindings of the context of reference.
3. **Portability**: good practice should be used to find a solution to similar problems, in different contexts.

4. **Innovation:** good practices should propose new solutions and new ways to approach existing problems, as well as they should be able to foresight new situations created by changes in family life and structures.
5. **Empowerment:** good practices should promote the reinforcement of family identity, family development and family social inclusion.
6. **Mainstreaming:** good practices could become an example and an inspiring instrument for other administrations (*horizontal mainstreaming*), or could have an impact in policy-making processes (e.g. being able to change legislations, *vertical mainstreaming*).

In the European Alliance for Family Database, to which we refer to great extent in our research, good practices are defined as “successful initiatives supporting families”.

a) The European Alliance for Families Database

The European Alliance for Families started its activity in 2007, under the German EU Presidency by Angela Merkel. In these years, the European Alliance for Families has been developing a web-site (http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/emplweb/families/index.cfm) with information and suggestions on family policy issues across the EU, aiming to support the widespread of family-friendly policies. The web site, recently renewed in graphics and contents, is divided into 6 sections:

1. Country profiles: for each Country, a detailed summary of family policies.
2. Good Practice
3. Studies and Reports
4. Statistics (OECD and Eurostat resources)
5. Glossary
6. News

Of particular interest in our research is section 2, where we can find a database, or more precisely a reference-page on good practices in family policies

(http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/emplweb/families/index.cfm?langId=en&id=3).

The reference page follows the division of family policies in 8 macro-areas:

- **Financial Support** or, in the new version of the website, **Financial Assistance**. In this section small pilot-project or nationwide schemes on how to help families on the economic point of view are presented.
- **Leave arrangements**. In this section, good practices on how to support parents with young children or ill relatives are presented. Leave arrangements are part of national family policies.
- **Childcare**. This section illustrates policies meant either to expand provision of childcare, or broaden types of childcare, or support access to certain groups. We can find projects developed to national or local level, according to the national welfare system and the national legislation and provisions on childcare.
- **Labelling and Audit schemes**. Certification and ‘audits’ related to family-friendly policies in companies have been employed to great effect in a number of EU countries. There are typically three ways of labeling or promoting work-life balance:
 - o *Audit schemes*, an official certification achieved after having implemented family-friendly policies within the organization (private

- sector as well as public institution). To achieve the certification, the organization has to comply with fixed requirements and has to follow a real audit process. Present in Germany, Austria and Italy, the audit schemes are realized in local and micro-level (the single organizations).
- o *Award*, organizations implementing family-friendly policies are awarded with a prize in money and visibility. Awards can be a national or a regional level (Hungary, Poland, but also Lombardy Region in Italy)
 - o *Programmes and Charters*, national programmes or charters realized often by national authorities for helping parents in balancing work and family life. Programmes and charters have been realized in Germany and France at national level.
- **Family-friendly workplaces.** Good practices on work-life balance in both public and private sector are presented in this section from many European countries.
 - **Parenting Support.** In this section projects on helping parents in their task are presented. There are both local and national programmes and are addressed to the parents with specific needs: pregnancy, young children, adolescents, mothers and so on.
 - **Active Fatherhood.** On average, fathers still participate significantly less than mothers in the upbringing of children. The projects presented in this section are meant to help fathers to play a more active role, in the view of the gender equality between sexes in family-life.
 - **Help for Children and Young Adults.** The transition to adulthood is becoming more and more complex, and therefore national programmes for helping young adults are being implemented. Also programmes to help disadvantaged children are promoted to both national and local level, or a mix of the two levels (national and local partnership).
 - **Active Ageing.** Europeans live longer and stay longer in good health. The elderly should have an opportunity to engage in rewarding activities such as volunteering in family centres, taking part in childcare and continuing learning.

In the Family Alliance database of good practice there is no distinction between national and local family policies, and no division among the policies brought on by the Institutions (State, Regions, Cities) and those implemented by private actors (e.g. work-family policies realized in business community, company welfare or audit and labelling processes).

We have tried to make a short list of local policies among the one presented in the European Alliance for Family Database.

Good Practices in the European Family Alliance Database

Area of Intervention	State	City	Project	Project Description	Reference
Childcare	Cyprus	Nicosia	Childcare during the School Holidays	A childcare centre run by the Community Welfare Council Ergaton, in Nicosia, is one of the few NGO centres in Cyprus to stay open all day (from 7am to 7pm) for children aged 2-5 during school holidays. The Community Welfare Council Ergaton, which runs the school, benefits from Cyprus's Grant-in-Aid Scheme, under which the country's social welfare services provide technical and financial support to NGOs for the development and provision of community care services.	http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/emplweb/families/index.cfm?id=3&langId=en&prDetId=64
Parenting Support	UK	Web based	Netmums	Founded in 2000 Netmums is the UK's fastest-growing online parenting organisation with over 756,000 members, mostly mums. Netmums is a family of local sites that cover the UK, each site offering information to mothers. Netmums receives funding through the 'Parent Know How programme', which is supported by UK government's Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). Each local website is edited and maintained by a local mum with support from our central team. The uniqueness of the Netmums concept stems from the belief that only other local mothers can truly access and provide the local information essential to life as a mum to young children in each specific area. The site provides also a Forum, in which many parenting issues are discussed. Netmums receives funding through the 'Parent Know How programme', which is supported by UK government's Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). This totals £1,703,433 (€1,910,202.93) for 2008-2011. Netmums will also receive an additional £50,000 (€56,066.67) to develop online materials to support families through the recession.	http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/emplweb/families/index.cfm?id=3&langId=en&prDetId=67
Financial support	Italy	Modena	Modena Family Card	Families with three or more children aged under 18 and with a total income below €80,000 can receive a Family Card. Promoted and distributed by the Modena City Council, in agreement with a local Bank, the Modena Family Card allows possessors to have rebates and discounts in a local supermarket chain (Conad) and in many shops and outlets. The number of families in Modena that subscribe and benefit from the Family Card since its implementation, in 2006, is between 1000–1200.	http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/emplweb/families/index.cfm?id=3&langId=en&prDetId=126

Active Ageing	Denmark	Gledsaxe	Reserve Grandparent Scheme	Many working parents struggle to find a carer to look after their sick children when they need to return to work. This problem has inspired an innovative response: recruiting support from local senior citizens. Under the voluntary 'Reserve Grandparent Scheme', retired older people are invited to step in and care for sick children when their parents need to get back to work. The Danish Ministry of Social Welfare manages the financing of the scheme, which benefitted from €650,000 of government support in 2008. 'Reserve Grandparent Scheme' initiatives are supported in seven locations across Denmark. One of these is in the municipality of Gledsaxe and is managed by a local non-profit association. The scheme operates under a maximum ratio of five families per participating grandparent. Currently, five grandparents offer standby support to 25 families in the town. Parents need to accept that grandparents are only available to take care of ill children and that it cannot be guaranteed that the same grandparent will be available each time. The grandparents receive a small monetary token (€4.25 per hour) from parents in exchange for the care they provide. The Gledsaxe Reserve Grandparents team organises social events, such as picnics and carnivals to strengthen links between the grandparents and families and form a real network.	http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/emplweb/families/index.cfm?id=3&langId=en&prDetId=131
Childcare	Latvia	Liepaja	Liepaja Babysitter Center	The Liepaja Babysitters Agency, which was created in the framework of the national strategy (Latvian Action Plan on family policy) to tackle the childcare shortage issue at local level, helps to ensure that more families have better access to child-minding services, but also that parents do not have to bear all the expenses for quality services. The local government of Liepaja provides financial support to the agency, which depends to some extent on the level of local parents' uptake of its services. In addition to helping families with adequate child minding, the agency provides formal training for babysitters to improve their skills. A local babysitter database has been created and is online for consultation (http://www.liepad.lv/), with CVs and photos of available babysitters. So far 60 people have been trained locally to provide babysitter services and the Liepaja Babysitters Agency currently provides babysitter services to 25 families. The local government also monitors the service, to ensure it is providing quality as well as quantity. Other municipalities have expressed an interest in developing similar services.	http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/emplweb/families/index.cfm?id=3&langId=en&prDetId=183

No comparison among good practices, according to our findings and also as emerges from a first set of remarks on the European Alliance for Families web page, is available at the moment.

The good practice model bears in itself the difficulty of comparison, indeed, if quality and results are not monitored, and most of all if good practices do not become a transferable model.

In spite of that, according to our research on the web and also to our practice, we can state that in Europe there is a large amount of good practices of local family policies, which have not gained a “European relevance” yet. We mean that, as in Italy, in many Countries we can find good practices that are not “exported”, for reasons due to language barriers, in some cases, but also on the inner complexity and differentiation of National welfare systems, as we will state also in our conchave already showed (see paragraph 2.1.).

b) Good practices in depth

In this paragraph we examine four different good practices: an explicit family policy developed by a municipality, two national/local programmes (e.g. programmes decided at national level, but in which the local institutions and organisations play a strategic and crucial role, as German Family Alliance and the Dutch system of community schools) and a time-related policy funded by a Communitarian programme.

These good practices show different approaches to the issue of family policies: it will be of great interest, in the critical review of the Research, confronting and valuing those different methods, also in respect of their reproducibility and portability.

In the analysis in depth of good practices, we have to be acknowledged that there are a lot of good practices on local family policies in Europe: the main issue, up to know and also emerging from our research, is that they fail to be systematized in a common frame, and that they fail to become a coherent system of family policies as well.

So there are maybe many other interesting good practices that, in the present work, haven’t been analyzed. Our goal is therefore not to make an exhaustive in-depth analysis, but trying to underline the positive and inspiring approaches emerging from these good practices.

1) An explicit family policy in a local administration: the global program of the Municipality of Parma

The Municipality of Parma, in Italy (population: about 180.000), has engaged in a strong promotion of local family policies throughout the creation of the Agency for the Family (<http://www.famiglia.comune.parma.it/famiglia/>, only in Italian language, at present), that is not a Councillorship or a provider of services, but a “light” structure devoted to develop innovative programs in collaboration with many different administrative and institutional subjects, as well as associations and families organisations.

The planning document of the Municipality of Parma points out some main **principles and values**:

- The family, as stated in the Italian Constitution, is the natural context of care, protection and education of person;

- within the policies of the Administration, the family is seen as a value and is considered as the main factor of welfare production;
- the following principles, inspiring the Municipal policies, are derived from the consideration of the dignity of person and the family: human welfare, solidarity, subsidiarity, and common good.

The **objectives** of the local family policies are to «support the families in carrying out their duties and facilitate the birth of new families (...) This is achieved through “family friendly” alliances and the creation of a subsidiary welfare characterized by the development of social relationships among the various actors in the voluntary and no-profit sector, business and family organisations.

To achieve these objectives, the following **strategies** will be followed:

1. *The promotion of the family as a social and responsible resource* and the involvement of family associations in the planning of actions in favour of the family itself.
2. *The review of the operating-processes of Public Administration in a family-friendly prospective.* That is to say, that the construction of a family-friendly living environment should be attentive to families’ needs and requests.
3. *Innovate through the enhancement of the existing.* All initiatives, services and activities currently underway should be read in a family-friendly perspective. The innovations are designed to give new guidance to all administrative action, according to two basic criteria, which have not been applied in Italy yet:
 - a. Fiscal and social family-based equity;
 - b. Assessment of impact on the family;
4. *A new governance* based on the involvement of all stakeholders and social actors of the community, orienteering on a subsidiary welfare based on family attention (and not a workfare, as is today in Italy).

The **methodologies** implemented will focus on family and family organisations empowerment, and in particular on:

- educational processes;
- networking methodologies;
- activation of Community Processes;
- organizational Development.

The Agency for the Family has individuated 7 macro-areas. For each area, general objectives are defined, and a series of actions are being pursued or implemented. These 7 areas are:

- **Resources and Family** (Parma Family Card, review of the current taxation policies). This macro-area can be easily referred to the first macro-area in the European Alliance for Family database.
- **Education and Family** (Parma as an educating community). Also this macro-area entangles a similar macro-area of the European Alliance for Family database, Parenting Support.
- **Solidarity by Families** (Family Laboratories, fostering and adoptive families, intercultural projects between immigrant and Italian families)
- **Environment and Family** (green areas, new strategies for urbanisation, social housing)

- **Work and Family** (harmonization of work-family-city times). Also this macro-area entangles two different macro-area of the European Alliance for Families database, the one devoted to family friendly workplaces and the one devoted to Audit schemes and labelling.
- **Care and Family** (Tagesmutter, families with disabilities) entangles the Alliance for Family database's macro-area "Childcare"
- **Leisure Time and Family.**

As we can see from this very brief summary of this is a program proposing an *explicit, coherent* and *legitimate* local family policy based on subsidiarity and bringing the family as the core of the policies intersecting many different areas: financial support, education, social inclusion, housing and so on.

From our point of view: the political programme of the Municipality of Parma proposes an *explicit, coherent* and *legitimate* local family policy based on subsidiarity and bringing the family as the core of policies intersecting many different areas: financial support, education, social inclusion, housing and so on. The "family issue" has been, as a matter of fact, totally assumed by the Mayor and his staff. Moreover, family associations have been deeply involved in the project and many efforts have been spent to involve the whole local community, from family associations to migrants, from Municipal offices to the industrial and economical community (in the context of Parma, quite a small urban area, we can find three multi-national enterprises in the Chemical and Food sector, that is quite a big percentage, most of all in comparison with the Italian economic texture, characterized by small and medium enterprises).

2) The German Alliance for Families

In order to help employers to change their attitude to family-work balance for employees, since 2004 the German government has sponsored a partnership between the employer's federations, chambers of commerce, trade unions and two private foundations to establish 'Local Alliances for the Family' (*Lokale Bündnisse für Familie*, <http://www.bmfsfj.de/BMFSFJ/familie,did=15564.html>).

It has allocated a budget of €8 million (half funded by the European Social Fund) over two years to support a national **service bureau**, which advises anyone who wants to establish a local alliance on such matters as partnership building and public relations. As an agency of an 'activating state', it does not try to set the local agenda. The response has been good, and more than 100 local alliances have been set up in the first 11 months of its operation.

These alliances aim for financial self-sufficiency, involve different partners (such as municipalities, employers' organisations, community organisations and churches) and address a wide range of different problems. They might work on ensuring that nurseries are open during the working hours of local factories, that local authorities will pay for childcare provided to their residents even if it is outside their boundaries, installing nurseries, finding part-time "godparents", or providing ethnic minority children with German-language lessons.

A network of local alliances is in place, and continued rapid growth is expected.

From our point of view: We have not found any evaluation research or study (in English) on the German Alliance for Family, therefore we cannot make any evaluation on the results achieved in this projects, which is still going on. Anyway, the German Alliance for Family can be valued as a coherent, explicit and legitimate family policy, decided at a national level, but in which the local level holds a strategic importance: the involvement and capacities of local institutions and organisations determine, in this framework, the success or failure of the project.

3) *The Community School in the Netherlands*

The first community schools in the Netherlands were started about ten years ago. Community schools are alliances of schools, child care, welfare institutions, sports clubs, libraries, health institutions and others. There are now 500 community schools in the Netherlands in over half of the country's municipalities. Community schools are formed primarily by means of the efforts of local organizations that are convinced that, through cooperation, they have more to offer parents, children and community residents.

Cooperation between the various disciplines results in more efforts to enhance the children's opportunities for development, to offer a closed system of day care and to strengthen social cohesion in the community.

The notion of 'the community school' became a well-known concept in the Netherlands in the second half of the 1990s at a time when welfare and educational policy were decentralized to municipalities and integrated youth policy could be developed at a local level. The term 'community school' was first used in Rotterdam, but various other cities and towns in the Netherlands soon adopted the concept. Now, each municipality gives its own form, shape and name to the community school (*Open wijk school, Vensterschool, Kantoorurenschool, etc.*)

The Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (2000) use the following description: "the community school is a network of education and other provisions for children and parents, such as child care, social services, welfare, culture, sports etc., and the aims are to promote children's active participation in society, offer children a well-structured plan for the day, eliminate potential developmental delays and increase their social competence". The decentralization of parts of welfare and educational policy has enabled municipalities to make their own decisions about the organization of integrated youth and educational provisions. Many municipalities find the community school an appealing model. Community schools are established with local funding, not with national government funding.

Cooperation between institutions can help community schools to better manage social developments and problems. The arrival of migrants, for instance, has resulted in a considerable number of families in the Netherlands that do not speak Dutch at home. Community schools offer children from these families a number of ways to improve their Dutch language proficiency. In a monitor covering the years 2001, 2002 and 2003, the development of the community school in the Netherlands was described (*Jaarbericht brede school, Oberon*). It appears that in 2003, 54% of the municipalities are working on setting up community schools (compared to 36% in 2001, and 53% in 2002). In 2003, out of the 7,500 primary schools in the Netherlands, about 500 were operational community schools for children aged 0-12.

The prognosis is that there will be about 1,200 community schools in 2010. These are all very different in set-up because the community school is an alliance that is adapted to suit local needs.

The main objectives of community schools are:

- to increase children's opportunities for development (90%)
- to improve cooperation between institutions (83%)
- to realize a continuous course of development (79%)
- to create a closed network around children (75%)
- to build multifunctional schools (61%).

Most community schools are located in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (76%) and restructuring neighbourhoods (5%). However, an increasing number are located in new housing developments (7%) and town centres (8%).

The five main partners are:

1. primary education (95%)
2. playgroups (90%)
3. child care (83%)
4. welfare (55%)
5. library (45%)

In addition, the following institutions may also cooperate in a community school: social work, home care, Area Health Authority, school advisory service, music school, centre for arts and culture, sports club, youth centre, residents, police, migrants' organizations, playgrounds, etc.

The process of setting up a community school involves four phases:

1. **Initiative.** The initiative of setting up a community school may come from the municipality, schools or other institutions. Each participant brings its own expertise and quality, and participants altogether have to formulate a joint vision of the community school. Ambitions, visions and desired have to be described in a framework policy document, involving all potential core partners.
2. **Preparation.** The needs and wishes of children, parents and community residents have to be mapped. This means that the needs and wishes of children, parents and community residents have to be mapped. Further, the new activities to be offered should be an extension of the existing activities that institutions already offer. In the preparation phase the administrative, organizational, financial, spatial and technical conditions are realized. In setting up a community school, cooperation between the partners is the crucial issue. It is advisable to form a project group at operational level during the preparation phase.
3. **Implementation phase.** The partners drew up a plan of activities (work plan) (bi)annually. In order to make the activities offered match the needs and wishes of the children and possibly the parents or community residents, it is advisable to regularly enquire into their needs. Insight into supply and demand can also be gained from the regular evaluation of the existing activities being offered, by examining participation statistics and by conducting a satisfaction survey. In the implementation phase, cooperation between the partners becomes more intensive. In the preparation phase, project groups and coordinators have usually started working and a municipal project leader has been appointed. This structure is now extended to include a project organization with a clear task set for all the different groups up to and including location level. Several models can be used for this. It is

important that all administrators of the partner schools and institutions are represented in a steering group. The municipality may also have a representative in this group.

4. **Consolidation.** If the pilot has gone well, one can decide to expand to other communities. The experience gained so far determines whether or not the development of the community school is to be continued in the same form. It may be continued on the same scale or on a smaller or larger scale. After political decision-making is completed, a new implementation cycle may be started.

From our point of view: although Community School was not intended to be a family policy, it shows to be, out of any doubt, a policy helping families with care responsibilities, and a policy of inclusion for disadvantaged families. Moreover, it is a genuine local policy, as it is projected and implemented at local level. This programme also shows to be very innovative, focused on the community empowerment, and it is valuable for the methodology proposed.

4) The Egalité des temps Project in Rennes, France

The Time Bureau in the city of Rennes established a territorial time policy with fundings from FSE Action EQUAL. The strengthening of the Time Bureau in the city of Rennes was set up in 2002. For people struggling to reconcile their working and their private lives, time is the most precious commodity. The decision to create a physical infrastructure to develop strategies that would improve the work-life-balance of women and men was based on research. This research looked into the changes involved in moving from an industrial society with work closely tied into well-established living patterns of families and communities, to a service and information society where the rhythms are increasingly out of sync. The results of the study highlighted the fact that the irregular and atypical working times of a large part of the population did not coincide or coordinate with the "times of the city", i.e. the opening hours of local authorities, shops and stores, childcare facilities, schools and other service providers and even the public transport schedules. Moreover, it appeared that women, who in most cases have to bear the brunt of care and other family tasks, were suffering more than men from the time pressures caused by this lack of articulation.

Harmonising the "times of the city"

Thus, the Time Bureau seeks to accommodate the needs of men and women who are trying to strike a more satisfying balance between the different demands on their time. One of its major tasks is to harmonise the "times of city" so as they are more in keeping with the needs of its citizens. This involves close cooperation between different public authorities and private sector organisations. The local government set the ball rolling by opening six "neighbourhood town halls". These local administrative centres help people save their precious time by catering for almost every type of demand from obtaining a copy of a birth certificate, through using health and social services, to setting up an appointment with a careers guidance or placement officer. In addition, in three city districts, social services have been reorganised as one-stop-shops for certain categories of users such as families with children. These centres specialise in early childhood and educational activities, financial aid and issues like family planning, pregnancy care and supporting couples in crisis situations. A website was also set up to respond to citizen's needs. It offers a special service entitled *Tic Tac, le temps à la carte* that provides real time information on all the relevant services and events in the city and a tool to track those that are most convenient to either the home or the workplace of the internet user.

Improving the flexibility of childcare services

In Rennes, childcare centres and primary schools are now offering extra services before and after their former, regular opening hours. This is a real lifeline for parents who have to work on early morning and evening shifts. In addition, care facilities that provide emergency cover have been established through public-private-partnerships. Such facilities offer support to parents when their jobs suddenly require them to work overtime or when they cannot take time off work to look after a sick child. Thanks to EQUAL, the DP is co-financing an NGO to provide home-based care for children and was also instrumental in setting up a childcare centre serving the employees from factories and plants in large industrial zone. This centre is subsidised by different companies and several municipalities and opens from 6.00 to 21.00. The children can stay for a maximum of ten hours per day and the fees are income-dependent. A small number of the places are always reserved for emergency use.

Tailored work organisation

The city government decided to pilot a new scheme that it hoped would set an example of family-friendly working time arrangements to other employers. The scheme succeeded in dismantling the "broken shifts" system that was the usual pattern for the cleaning of all municipal buildings. To make enough income, the predominantly female staff had to work two shifts, one in the early morning and another at night. However with the help of this scheme, they now have full-time jobs and can either opt for a schedule from 7.30 to 15.30 or from 10.45 to 18.45. Team work is a key element in this new model. Whilst in the past, one person had been responsible for a certain number of square metres, two women now share the work of cleaning a larger area. The rota for cleaning certain items and parts within this floor area is calculated in such a way that one cleaner can replace the other in case of absence. Moreover, the new scheme has enabled women to swap workplaces so that some now live closer to work and need less time to commute. As a result of all the changes brought about by the DP, absenteeism has dropped by 30%.

Widening the concept of reconciliation

The *Egalité des temps* DP is not only enabling women and men to achieve a better reconciliation between their duties at work and in the home, but also helping them to lead a fuller and more satisfying life. Such a life means time to socialise with friends and participate in cultural and civic activities and - at least now and again - time for oneself. A study carried out by the DP revealed that the timings and venues of cultural events almost entirely excluded people with care responsibilities or those living on the outskirts of the city from attending. Several ways of remedying this situation were tested. For instance, midday concerts were organised in an industrial complex for people who could not, or would not normally, attend evening performances of classical music. The offer was a package that included lunch and drinks, all for a reasonable sum of somewhere between 6 to 10 euro. Each concert was fully booked and 80 percent of the audience were female, whereas in terms of the overall workforce in this industrial zone women form only 20 percent. Other examples of these new cultural opportunities are the "Happy Hours" at the Rennes Theatre. These short performances take place between 18.00 and 20.00, so that people go to the theatre straight after work. A ticket costs only 3 euro and for that price, parents can also leave their offspring in the theatre's crèche.

Changing traditional gender roles and attitudes

The DP is very aware that if there is to be more equality in the use of time, then the traditional gender roles of men and women have to be overturned and the stereotypes that might still be harboured by employers and the general public have to be destroyed. To trigger an open debate

on these issues a partnership was forged with the Rennes TV station. This channel produced five documentaries, portraying people who are tackling the reconciliation of their different life times and responsibilities. These films were broadcast in autumn 2004 and followed by public discussions in various parts of the city. In addition, lectures and meetings were organised that focused on different aspects of the use of time and, each time, these were attended by hundreds of people.

EQUAL achievements going mainstream

To secure the mainstreaming and sustainability of its activities the DP established a Commission whose work will continue after the lifespan of EQUAL. Members are political decision-makers, representatives of local associations, public authorities, hospitals, social partner organisations and major enterprises such as SNCF (the French Railway System), the Postal Services, and Peugeot-Citroën. The Commission has committed itself to further develop the time policies and practices so far adopted by the different territorial players. This process is also benefiting from transnational cooperation. Similar to the Rennes DP, local governments were playing a key role in both of its partner projects in Italy and Spain and some of their initiatives to improve the articulation of peoples' life times are being transferred and adapted. This is particularly true for a range of services successfully tested by the Italian partner: a childcare centre as a common venture of several enterprises operating in the same industrial zone; mail delivery to the workplace; car sharing and flexible transport services jointly organised and financed by the municipality and an employers' consortium.

(From: EQUAL Database)

From our point of view: The *Egalité des temps* projects is a local policy of conciliation of work and family life, supported by ESF Funds. It is interesting because it broadens the concept of work-life balance to many aspects of local and communitarian life, implementing many actions that, although not specifically targeted to family, can improve family-life.

3. Methodological Discussion

The methodological discussion moves from the results we have achieved about the state of the art of the research. Due to the extreme poverty of comparative data, and the absence of systematic analysis, we can state that:

- a. The *quantitative evaluation* is extremely complex, as we cannot dispose of numerical structural indicators. Comparison among different territories and different local policies is therefore hardly possible.
- b. The *qualitative evaluation* seems more productive, as it is more oriented in detecting the complex and interactive mechanisms of local networks. By using this methodology we can be much more able to find the actors that determine local policy's efficacy: which are the stakeholders, the institutions, the rules that can lead to success and efficacy.
- c. A methodology to evaluate and to define good practices is also necessary. According to our research a strong attention is usually given to good practices' efficacy, but lesser attention is driven towards two other key factors: its reproducibility and its portability. Working on good practices model without enhancing their portability and the possibility of their diffusion can reveal to be of no much significance. Of course, good practices' promoters (e.g. local institutions in collaboration with many different actors) are mostly interested in local

stakeholders' needs, and are therefore mostly interested in good practices' efficacy. Dissemination could therefore be a task assigned to a supranational Agency, structured in a way similar to the German Alliance for Family.

4. Conclusions

The research on local family policies can be considered, according to our findings, in an embryonic state. We couldn't find any database or any comparative data available. We could not even find a specific focus on local family policies: we have therefore made use of some researches on local welfare, not specifically targeted to family policies, but rather on prevention or fight to social exclusion. Also the principle of subsidiarity, which has been recently promoted by European Union, is not targeted to local policies, but still remains a sort of "good intention". Good practices are disseminated in many documents, covering different areas of family policy and also different areas of the European social and political activities: from research programmes to social policies, the wide area of local family policies has been investigated through documents, but no comparison is possible at present.

This state of the art of the research on local family policies derives, in our judgment, from two joint factors: the complexity in defining family policy, and the complexity in comparing different national welfare systems. As a matter of fact, comparison between national family policies is nowadays an "assumed" and implicit topic of statistics, databases and studies.

The difficulty in defining the policies that can enhance the well-being of families bring about also the key political question on how to develop the local and territorial community as, as we have seen before, the well-being of families is strictly linked to the local dimension. The development of the local community is a responsibility of Local Institutions, of course, but is also a responsibility of each single actor playing at the local level: families, schools, associations, business community. All the stakeholders are therefore involved in the local level, as the European Alliance for Family database assumes in detecting the good practices.

The good practice model brings us lots of information and inspiring suggestions, even though we believe there is still a lack of definition about local family policies, as the European Alliance good practice page reference demonstrates. ***The collection of good practices needs, nevertheless, to become more systematic to allow comparisons and to permit an evaluation of the results achieved.***

This is probably due to the difficulty to draw, from single "case histories", methodological implications for structuring a coherent system of local family policies. We have therefore highlighted some methodological aspects that should be of use in qualifying a good practice, in making it portably and coherent.

A research agenda on local family policies would be therefore of great interest, developing methodologies and instruments for comparison and evaluation, building a sort of family mainstreaming in local family policies.

The concept of “Family Mainstreaming” finally deserves some specific attention/definition: it means, in the international approach, that the family becomes even more central as a criterion of good work in politics and administration.

So far, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the European Parliament have developed concrete definitions of the term Family Mainstreaming and its aims. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs includes in ‘mainstreaming the family issue’ the processes of

- identifying the implications for families of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes;
- making family concerns an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies;
- strengthening family-centred policies and programmes as part of an integrated and comprehensive approach to development planning.

The UN stresses that not only should the focus be on the family as a whole, but also that impacts on individual family members must be taken into account. The aims are similar to those of Gender Mainstreaming: real freedom of choice, equal participation, no discrimination. The family is seen here as the primary access to the members of a family. Thus, for example, it is not possible to support children who are HIV positive or who have AIDS if the family context is not also taken into account. In the same way, new and emerging issues such as fatherhood can be integrated into a family perspective. A central aspect of the UN’s call is not “strengthening the family” but rather “strengthening the functions of the family”. The UN includes as functions undertaken by members of the family caring, support and affiliation. ‘Family Mainstreaming’ therefore means giving these functions state support.

A standard definition of what the family is supposed to look like should, however, be avoided. The function of the family is thus seen as a place where persons undertake responsibility for each other. Family is therefore here defined by terms such as identity, responsibility and affiliation than as a marriage-centred institution.

The European Parliament has taken up the term ‘Family Mainstreaming’ in its *Resolution on Reconciling Professional, Family and Private Lives* (2003/2129 INI) and developed a much narrower definition than the UN. Here, ‘Family Mainstreaming’ means encouraging the Member States and accession states to analyse the impact of their policies on families, while at the same time calling on the Commission to take account of the various dimensions and definitions of the family in order to identify the social impact of the measures proposed. Thus, this would involve reviewing the anticipated impacts of family policy on various family forms and family members. According to the European Parliament, this would enable all family members to participate equally in the tasks and responsibilities of the family. Equally, various ways should be opened up for more freedom of choice with regard to matters of compatibility and discrimination should be avoided, especially in tax policy.

New research needs, actions, strategies and policies should therefore include an explicit reference to “family mainstreaming”.

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