

Themepaper to Topic 8

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Organisation and Preliminary Programme:



Landesverband Mütter- und Familienzentren in Bayern e.V.
Allacher Str. 211
80997 München
Tel. 0049-89-14 95 90 38
Internet: www.muetterzentren-in-bayern.de

Topic 8 – More than a cup of coffee - What does it mean to have a supporting community / to get support through a caring community?” Summary of the discussion rounds for this topic from the participating Grundtvig partners

Mother and family centers are a place of a caring and supporting community. Mothers return back to their job earlier than 5 years ago and the time for building family has got less so a supporting community like in the mothercenters has got a big sense for the young families to be really supported and strengthened.

We are a partnership of mothercenters in 8 countries. Our mothercenters are community spaces where young parents meet and organise. They are started by the parents themselves and vary in size and programme depending on local circumstances. One important thing is always the same: the heart of our centers is a place, where the parents can drop in at any time with their children and have coffee, a talk and find information. We call it our “public living room”. For this public living room we have the same rules for nearly all mothercenters to make it to a safe place for the parents.

For this topic we discussed several questions in the Grundtvig partner countries and at about 10 bavarian mothercenters with the following results:

What has changed in the last years for families and which special needs they have in these times of social change? What does it mean for the families to have a supporting community particularly concerning the demographic development and the development of the employment market?

The summary of the discussions was that in several countries three things have changed:

Women more and more go back to work and the point of time they go back is earlier. The families live often far away from their own parents or sisters or brothers. So the big part of social support financial things support through their own families is not given and they have to build a new social network. The women want to be independent and earn their own money and the costs for flats and buying food and pay the costs of child care are growing higher so both parts of the parents have to work for bringing up the money to pay the costs for their daily life. Nowadays the economy wants more and more the women to work they need the women with good job education for work. The society has changed – The possibilities for child care grown because the economy needs the women. Before women had to make the decision to stay at home till the children are old enough to go to school or to pay for childcare or to have family members to do child care.

Now more and more partnerships are broken and there are more and more alone educating mothers or fathers and they have to work to get enough money for their daily life.

Now in many families are the grandparents not nearby because the parents have to move with the job possibilities and there is no helpful network families can use. Years ago there have existed three generation accommodations, where grandparents and the young families lived together in the same city. There the grand parents could care easily the grand european kids and support the new families. This is what happened in munich but in other European cities although.

It's a european development that the young families have not the time to grow to a really good working family because the jobs of the parents need so much energy that the families get an early burnout and have less space for recreation. The children have to go to childcare very early and often for several hours every day to long and to young this not good for their personally development.

The women from other European countries had the experience, that the children are always in whole day schools because the parents had to work and family live starts only at the week and enough money vcan pay private childcare in a better pedagogic quality and in smaller groups or have day care mothers or babysitters. The economy don't ask what the very small children really need, the family live has to be compatible for the rules of jobs and work.

What does it mean for the families to have a supporting community or to get support through a caring community?

The needs of the families have changed in all countries because the social structures have changed.

Families need especially:

a good and reliable childcare very close to flat and job

a good working network for childcare and support in the daily live

a good flexible school system with a flexible possibility of daycare and whole day school offers and a lot of child programmes (sports, arts and culture)
time and possibilities for friendships
time for family
time for recreation
time for the partners and the work to be each other a good partner
support for being good parents because there is often no big family where they can learn automatically how to be good parents
time for sporting, culture and recreation
time for family activities
time and possibility for meeting other families and have a personal exchange and talkings about parenting
enough money for the family
a cheap flat with childfriendly neighbour
a special place which is safe and comfortable and lowbased to meet other families of the surrounding
good cheap possibilities for the daily shopping special good food markets

What kind of support I need personally?

Mutual help from the neighbours and support with the possibility to start a new network for the daily tasks. The mothers need good children playing groups with the possibility for talks and contacts to the other mothers and fathers to make friendships and exchange their personal experiences or problems and conflicts. Some mentioned they need public playgrounds to make new friends.

The mothers had the big wish for uncomplicated and spontane but qualified possibilities for childcare for only one till three hours the day to can go to a doctor or a haircutter or a job lessons and an au pair or babysitter service. Further the most needed things the parents named are childcare, seminars or advice for parenting skills, exchange with other parents of same-aged children, to reduce insecurity and develop a supporting group, grandparents "to rent", very flexible childcare offers, a network and meeting points with activities for fathers, childrens playing groups, contact for single-children, more time for me and my husband or partner, an open year and open arms for my needs or fears or worries, a pedagogic hotline for situations of crisis, courses in breast feeding, healthfull cooking and caring, sewing, knitting, cooking, PC, gymnastics and sports, pedagogic or psychology, learning a different language, wellness, massage, common sports for parents jogging with babies, more groups for children younger as a year, babysports and moving, music and arts

Which possibilities can MC's offer for the support of a caring community?

The MC's should ask first for the needs of the families in the surrounding and make special offers where the families can come without having any duties as being there and hear or talk and look and watch whats happening and feel welcome with their children and integrated, important is the open meeting point with flexible and much opening times and the cup of Tea or coffee and the "open ears and arms"; to give the parents and the children space and time to create "their MC" with the offers they need and like to do and support by themselves or get the support they need. Not to be seen as a client with defects or only

needs. Every human people has strengths and weaknesses and there is always something what he or she can do fine. The MC's can give concrete support like baby and childrens groups, childcare, babysitting, juristic, pedagogic or psychologic advice, first-aid or babysitter-courses, cultural events and family celebrations like St. Martin, Santa Claus, Easter or summerfestivals, rooms for family festivals like childrens partys or birthday or baptism, Activities like second-hand markets, common cheap cooking for example the family soup day

What can MC's contribute as a supporting group?

Near concrete support in their daily live like the points in the question before an important role of the MC's could and should be in every country to give the parents needs a voice in different political and social circles and work political this means to take the chance to talk together or substitutional with political local representatives.

Which kind and concrete offers can they give to support families in growing to or being a family?

The most important fact is giving the families space, time and support to grow to a family and to have a place for feeling welcome and integrated with no big tasks. The MC's should look what are good family times for activities for example at the early friday evening or the weekend if the fathers should be integrated or for example a sunday brunch or weekend day excursion for alone educating parents for not feeling isolated and alone with their children at the long weekend because the weekend is often a hard time for them. They know that the normal family do at the weekends often together nice things and they are sad if they don't have activities with other mothers or fathers

How does that fit to the society of today and how does that contribute to a caring community?

Who are the people who live in our direct surrounding (family, neighbours, mother center, daily childcare, advice-center) and what is our relationship to them?

Mother center visitors and active women and some few men, volunteer workers, Neighbours, friends, babysitter, day care people, people from commercial and social institutions for families and children or old people or people with handicaps

for example in Mühldorf a bavarian smaller city are there many good offers with good quality which are linked very well and good to reach for the citizens and families. There is many support through neighbours and institutions for young and elder families. Activities with other families or alone educating mothers or fathers offer the possibility to build a network. Their relationship to them are information centers, daily childcare, or acting as agency for babysitting, leisure time for activities with children, possibility to get support, exchange experiences that make yourself confident .

MC's as a lively network? How can we create a new modell for a "family of choice", a new type of extended family? Do MC's have confident cooperations? If not how can we create this and strengthen it?

The parents needs are to have a place in the MC's where they can meet, share their experiences and make friends for them and their children and get support. The problem of the MC's is, that the parents often want to take or use the offers and the coffee but don't like to give or bring some energies back in the

Center. We think, the social and working situation for the families has changed so hard that they have less energies and time to engage them in the work and projects of the Mother and familycenter. Often needed or wished offers cannot happen because there are not enough volunteers who organize them. So is one way and possibility to give the parents only small tasks over only short times. This works but the family Centers need more and more paid employees because more families need more and more intensive support. This cannot be by volunteers. There are needed good educated specialists for doing advice and concrete support for the more and more burned out families.

How do you see the MC`s , what is their meaning:

- **as a place of education and personal and social development?**
- The in the discussions participating mothers and fathers felt themselves very good informed and supported in their Mother or Family-Center. They use the courses and informationpools and advice times and through deepening their relationships and friendships their social network gets very strong. They feel them "be heard" through the employees or other visitors or the volunteers.
- **as a place of contact?**
- the open coffee or meeting points are good working places for new short or deeper contacts and the baby and childrens-playing-groups are a good way too to get and keep contacts to parents special from same aged children.; the parents told that they are now not so anonym in their part of their city, if they go shopping or to the children playing areas they know other parents from the mothercente . They shared the experience, that their Mother-Center was often their only possibility for contacting other parents especially if their children were young babies.
- **as a place of exchange?**
- The open meeting points and the open coffee- times and volunteer meetings give a good possibility for exchange and sharing their experiences for the parents and volunteers. The babiigroups in the mother centers and the second hand markets are often the "door opener" and through their low based atmosphere migrants or new families trust to come in feel welcome tod visit the Mothercenters.
- **as a place of support?**
- At first the support often happens through the employees or the volunteers if they are asked by concrete needs or problems. They support through giving concrete tipps or advice or practical help by doing formulars or giving the address of a good babysitter or doctor or childrens garden or school. Then if the parents come regularly they help each other with their talkings or concrete offers like babysitting or something like this. The second-hand-shops and flea markets are an important part for material support because many families have less money for buying clothes and toys for their children. Although for example common meals where the families are cooking and eating together. They have funny time contacts, the children have time together and its really cheaper to cook together.